■ Entertainment
Rebecca Lusterer: The actress who lives and sells seashells by the sea

■ Business / B1
Peso rallies to 5-month high of P55.91 to $1

■ Lifestyle / C4
All about Ampuring Aspirins as room on her 79th birthday

■ Sports / A20
Asi Taulava gets permanent injunction

■ Across / A15
Ex-Quezon police chief slain by Red rebels near home

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Palace indulgent toward Erap's HK gallivanting

By Juliet Labog-Javellana

MALACAÑANG is taking an indulgent stance toward ousted President Joseph Estrada's behavior after his knee-replacement surgery.

"He just had a dinner [with his friends] and slept in the Dictionet Soon. Things like that are not serious [infractions]. That's forgivable, this article is

Luisita farmer accuses Noynoy's supporters

By Michael Lim Ubac

A HUGE banner yesterday blamed followers of Rep. Benigno "Noynoy" Aquino III for the second bloody clash at the strike-busted Hacienda Luisita in Tarlac City on Jan. 5.

"Ano, eh, mga bata pa si Noynoy Aquino. Dito, eh, they are Noynoy Aquino's men[,]

e-mail: feedback@inquirer.com.ph
Thursday, January 13, 2005 • 30 pages / vol. 28 / no. 36
website: www.inq7.net

THE MAGNIFICENCE of the lobby of the Hong Kong Parkview evokes a luxurious European ambience where rent ranges from HK$30,000 to HK$110,000 per month for units ranging in size from 1,711 to 3,061 sq. ft. The address of prestige of the resort-cum-condominium is 88 Tai Tam Reservoir Road.

"SIYE Erap a hand and he'll ask for the whole arm," says Plaridel Watch of Bulacan's Hong Kong holiday.

Estrada coming home Saturday

Motion for 6-day extension in HK withdrawn

By Armand N. Nocum and Michael Lim Ubac

WITH his living-it-up lifestyle, an alleged violation of the court resolution governing his trip to Hong Kong now public knowledge, Joseph Estrada has ordered his lawyers to withdraw his motion to extend his stay there until Jan. 21.

The deposed President, who is recovering from a knee-replacement operation at the Hong Kong Adventist Hospital, is to return to Philippine Airlines' PR 209 on Jan. 15 following a six-day stay in the former Crown Colony. He flight arrives at 12:30 p.m., according to the media handlers.

Earlier, GF phoned his lawyers to relay his decision amid a heated debate yesterday at the Sandiganbayan special division concerning his alleged violation of the court-imposed conditions on his medical trip. Prosecution lawyers brought to court copies of yesterday's Inquirer, which had the report of his four-poker escort-adventure story.

"To cut short the controversy, let's coming home on Jan. 15. He hope and pray there will be no complications," Estrada's legal counsel Jesse Saguisag announced at the hearing.

Sen. Jinggoy Estrada confirmed that his father's lawyers had withdrawn the request for an extended stay. He said he would fly to Hong Kong today to collect his father and the rest of the family.

"We will be back on Jan. 15, as ordered by the Sandiganbayan," Jinggoy said.

Special Prosecutor Dennis Villa-Ignacio said after the hearing that Estrada could have withdrawn the motion because "he is allayed that Manolo na siya (he has been found out)."

He said the prosecution would also interview Estrada's police escorts regarding the latter's supposed trips outside the hospital.

The Jan. 13 issue of the Inquirer reported that Estrada and

"I am going to face my whole term," President Arroyo confidently says at the 68th anniversary celebration of the Manila Overseas Press Club at the Palace on Wednesday night.

GMA: I've full trust in Noli not to jump ship

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr. and Juliet Labog-Javellana

AMID rumored plots to destabilize her shaky government, President Macapagal-Arroyo confidently declared last night that she would finish her midterm post term.

At dinner she said she trusted her Vice President Noli de Castro would not jump ship.

"I am going to face my whole term and I will leave my 10-point program," Ms Arroyo replied during the 68th anniversary of the Manila Press Club held in Malacañang last night attended by journalists, cabinet officials, military officers and diplomats.

The President was asked to react to rumors of another destabilization plot to remove her from office, ringing the death of her rival for the presidency, Fernando Poe Jr., who had accused her of cheating but was not immediately.

Poe's widow, Ms Susan Roces, has vowed to protest the electoral protest filed by her husband against Ms Arroyo before the Supreme Court.

Asked how she felt about the opposition flexing the idea about

Erap says burning of ABS-CBN OB van a warning to media

By Armand N. Nocum

ERAP Al Malacañang confirmed Tuesday's burning of an ABS-CBN van by a group claiming to be supporters of the late movie actor Fernando Poe Jr., despised President Joseph Estrada party-day said the attack should serve as a warning to media organizations allegedly engaged in biased reporting.

Estrada called up the Inquirer from Hong Kong to also voice his displeasure over the news coverage of his medical trip to the latter British colony, saying it was a clear indication that the media were abusing its powers and no longer contributing to the country's progress.

Those were the same arguments that friends had raised about the burning of an advertisement banner of the business during his three years in power. The banner surrounded the ad banners but Estrada was overthrown during the so-called "Edsa II" in 2001 and later sentenced to jail on plunder charges.

Six masked gunmen stopped an ABS-CBN OB van at dawn Tuesday in Mandaluyong City, ordered the

Erap barber flew business class to HK

IT APPEARS that Joseph Estrada's barber flew to Hong Kong on business class.

Instead of the economy-type generated by the business barrier story on the Jan. 11 report of his four police escorts that, among other things, he had his barber flown in to see to his hair, Estrada yesterday phoned to say that the accusation was being made out of a misbelief.

"They are blowing up a small issue," he said, adding that he had to get his barber to Hong Kong because his debonair image did not allow "hospital service."

"I can't go to a beauty parlor, My hair is near long and I can't have my grooming with that look. What's wrong with that?" the ex-

Cops reporting on HK whoopee to be probed

By Christine V. Esguerra

JOSEPH Estrada's police escorts are not under fire for having him make whoopee in Hong Kong.

Philippine National Police Director Ermita Cruz Jr. said he will pay yesterday and he would tell the Sandiganbayan about the status of the motion by noon on Sept. 16.

Sen. Nicolas and the three other police officers making up Estrada's escort team.

"If they violated the authority given to them, then the necessary administrative charges will be filed against them," he said in response to a question.

Aglipay said he would find out whether it was all

Salonga: GMA is impeachable

By Fe Zamora

ANYTHING... and everything... for power.

President Macapagal-Arroyo will "do anything to stay in power," including allowing her nemesis Joseph Estrada to undergo surgical operations for his knees in Hong Kong, even if it would mean violating the rule of law, former Senate President Jovito Salonga said.

"From the time she ascended to the presidency in January 2001, GMA (Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo) has no use for the rule of law. She had always wanted Estrada to go sent free abroad," Salonga said in a scathing denunciation analysis of Estrada's trip to Hong Kong to be published this weekend in Bilo-

WHAT HARD TIMES?

Palace says Pinoys downed more beer last year

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr. and Luige A. del Puerto

FILIPINOS may not be swilling from hard times as they are getting down more beer and enjoying an pre-paid cellular phone cards. Malacañang said yesterday.

In contrast the gloomy economic outlook painted by recent polls, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye cited an NCTeleCom survey showing record sales for beer last year and the rise of pre-paid cellular phone cards as the country's beer-selling consumer trend more only to infant milk.

"If they can afford to buy these items, which we can consider a luxury, it means they have money," Bunye said in two separate radio interviews.

Bunye, however, ignored questions by broadcasters who suggested that Filipinos might be drinking more beer or sending more text messages on their mobile phones to forget their problems over the economy.

Beer sales usually surge when the economy is good because farmers earn more from their harvest, according to Bunye. But sales go down if the economy is bad and the farmer is poor so farmers stick to the cheaper gin.

Bunye said Malacañang was

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

THURSDAY, JANUARY 13, 2005

Second FRONTPAGE

WEATHER FORECAST

MILF to probe Maguindanao raid

By Charlie C. Santos
and Edwin G. Fernandez
First Mindanao Bureau

COTABATO CITY—The Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) General Command is now investigating its top field commanders who led the "unauthorized assault" on an Army detachment in Mamasapano, Maguindanao on Sunday which killed 17 MILF rebels and six soldiers.

MILF spokesperson Eid Kabalu said MILF chief of staff Sammy Almarzoe has summoned the two leaders of the attackers, Abdul Rahman Binago and Abdul Wahid Tundok, to appear before the MILF General Commission and explain their side on the deadly attack.

The attack on an Army base of the 105th Infantry Battalion violated a 2002 ceasefire agreement between the government and the separatist rebels.

The government yesterday said it wants to punish Muslim rebel leaders who launched the attack on the army outpost but Kabalu said the two rebel leaders would have to be investigated first.

"We want to bring the perpetrators to justice. And we hope the MILF will meet its authority over its commanders to yield any of the parties who have engaged in these deplorable actions," said presidential palace spokesperson Ignacio Bunye.

Kabalu said that although fighting had stopped, "the government will continue to take all means in bring the perpetrators to justice."

Both the government and the rebels have said the deadly assault would not hamper scheduled peace talks.

Kabalu said it was just proper for the accused to be heard before they are meted appropriate sanctions by the Bangsamoro Armed Forces.

"We cannot experiment or punish them immediately. The MILF is giving the two enough time to explain," Kabalu said, adding that the rebels were still awaiting an official request from the government for the two to be turned over.

Meanwhile, Lt. Col. Franklin del Prado, spokesperson of the Army's 6th Infantry Division, said "there is no substantive evidence" that would support the report cited in the inquirer that six soldiers were shot one after the other as they were tortured during the attack on the army detachment.

Kabalu earlier said the attack was not sanctioned by the MILF and that the commanders attacked the army outpost in apparent retaliation for the killing of Binago's brother, a bandit chief.

An international monitoring team, which includes members from Brunei, Libya and Malaysia, arrived in the center to conduct an investigation but would not commence on the incident. With AFP report

HD-HUH
While defense and prosecution lawyers fight it out in open court, one of the soldiers who staged the Oakwood mutiny in 2003 fell to sapping a yawn during yesterday's rebuttals arraignment at the general court-martial in Camp Aguinaldo. (See video of story inquirer.net/page)
EVA HOSTE

MILF replaces head of ceasefire panel

THE SECESSIONIST Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) yesterday replaced the head of its ceasefire panel, two days after a 17-month truce was broken by heavy fighting between soldiers and separatist rebels.

Reuben Montalbang, head of the MILF truce panel, announced his departure during a ceasefire meeting with government officials in Davao City, where both sides talked about ways to contain fighting in Maguindanao.

"We were not advised when he [left himself]," a senior military official in the government's truce panel told Reuters. "He introduced us to his replacement." Mr. al-Haq, head of the MILF's intelligence group, will take over from Montalbang, who is expected to return to his former position as chief of the rebels' military academy.

MILF spokesperson Eid Kabalu said the replacement of Montalbang was not related to the heavy fighting on Sunday and Monday in Mamasapano town in Maguindanao.

"The decision to reorganize the ceasefire panel was made before fighting broke out in Mamasapano," Kabalu told Reuters.

"These changes are routine. The fighting was only a coincidence."

On Wednesday, government troops shelled rebel positions in another gun battle erupted in areas by Datu Piang, Datu Saudi Ampatuan town, leaving 3,000 to 5,000 families to abandon their farms and homes to avoid getting caught in the crossfire.

Brig. Gen. Alexander Yano, head of government's truce panel, said they had asked the MILF to help arrange arrest the leader of the rebel forces who overran an army outpost on Sunday night in Mamasapano town. Reuters

GMA asked to comment on Roces petition

By Philip C. Tubeza

THE PRESIDENTIAL Electoral Tribunal has asked President Macapagal-Arroyo to comment on the petition of actress Susan Roces to substitute for her late husband, actor Fernando Poe Jr., in the election protest case against her.

The tribunal on Tuesday issued a resolution directing the lawyers of Mrs. Arroyo to comment on Roces' petition within 15 days.

"The next action of the court will be determined after it receives the comments from the President," Associate Justice Artemio Panganiban said yesterday.

Roces on Monday asked the tribunal to allow her to substitute for Poe, adding that she possessed the "legal capacity and standing" to do so and that Poe's death on Dec. 14 did "not extinguish" the election protest against Mrs. Arroyo.

Poe, who may have lost to Mrs. Arroyo, has claimed that he was cheated in the election count results from 10,554 precincts in seven provinces, one city, and seven municipalities and ballot results in 118,108 precincts from 42 cities and provinces.

Panganiban said this was the first time that the PET had received a petition for substitution in an election protest for a presidential race.

"In so far as the PET (is concerned), this is the first time, but the [House of Representatives Electoral Tribunal or the HRET] has already taken up a case like that and so has the Supreme Court in a number of election cases in the past," he said.

Panganiban said that the court would rule "promptly" on Roces' petition since it heard from both parties and that process has been satisfied.

"The court always rules promptly on such substitutes. Its rulings are delayed because of the necessity of due process. We have to hear both sides and hear them well before we render judgement. The primary duty of the court is to render judgement unto after due process," he said.

Romulo Macalintal, the Arroyo's lawyer, earlier said that Roces could not substitute for her husband because that would have "no legal basis."

Gov't to appeal Piatco ruling, wants new judge

By Philip C. Tubeza

THE GOVERNMENT will ask the Supreme Court to overturn a Pasay City judge's ruling ordering the government to pay $62.34 million to the consortium that built the supposedly luxury Ninoy Aquino International Airport Terminal 3, said Solicitor General Alfredo Benipayo.

It will also ask the high tribunal to inhibit Judge Hermelo Gingoyon from hearing the case for being "too biased," Benipayo said.

The government will seek today a temporary restraining order from the SC to reverse Gingoyon's Jan. 4 ruling and to stop the Philippine Air Terminals Co. from withdrawing the $62.34 million from the Land Bank of the Philippines.

Piatco's owners will be "laughing all the way to the bank" if this money is released, Benipayo said in a telephone interview.

Even before the government could go to the SC, however, representatives of Piatco were already in the Bacolod branch of Landbank early yesterday where they tried, but failed, to withdraw the money.

Manny Bañada, a lawyer for Piatco, said the Ayala-led Piatco employees had gone to the bank to prepare the papers for the withdrawal of the money which is to be done by its Chairing Yang, the Piatco president and chair.

But Bañada said the bank's assistant manager, Cinda Muñoz, told her that she should deal with the bank's legal department.

Bañada and the Piatco employees had to wait for half an hour before being allowed to enter the bank's executive jewels.

Gingoyon of the Pasay City Regional Trial Court on Jan. 4 ordered the government to make a partial payment of $62.34 million to Piatco after the court issued a writ of possession allowing the government to take over the disputed terminal.

The money was to be taken from the provisional deposit that the government made with the court when it filed the case of expropriation against Piatco.

Benipayo considered why the decision making Gingoyon to reverse his decision and let the judge to inhibit himself from the case. The judge rejected those motions on Tuesday.

Yesterday, Benipayo said the government should seek the high tribunal to inhibit Gingoyon on the ground that he allegedly "prejudged" the case, put in doubt on the issue of just compensation to be paid to Piatco.

He wondered how Piatco could have learned of the Jones court's order as soon when before authorities were lured par to some announcement Piatco.

"Only moments after the presiding judge issued the order on Jan. 4, a lawyer for Piatco was scurrying to serve the same upon the Landbank in Bacolod," Benipayo said.

"How the Piatco lawyer came to know the issuance of such order, without prior notice Piatco would not be served with summons, remains a spellbinding mystery," said Benipayo.

Benipayo said that Gingoyon's order was "irregular," saying that Piatco had not asked the court for the release of the money from the Landbank.

He said the money should have been released only after the court had determined the just compensation to be paid to Piatco and after the government had carried out a thorough inspection of the terminal to find out if it was safe to operate. With a report from Nancy Carvajal

'Missing' officer not missing, says lawyer

By Philip C. Tubeza

The "missing" suspected coup plotter, Lt. Col. Gerardo B. Maquilo, is still "detained" in Camp Aguinaldo, his counsel said yesterday.

Lawyer Homobono Adasa said yesterday that Maquilo was still inside the military camp despite the Armed Forces' claim that he escaped his military custody on Dec. 25.

"I saw they sourcheovers building in Camp Aguinaldo? He's still there and he can't get out because he will be arrested," Adasa said.

He said he had contact with Maquilo through his cell phone and that the officer was still inside the military camp.

Adasa spoke after the Court of Appeals Sixth Division held a hearing on his petition for a writ of habeas corpus in behalf of Maquilo. The court gave the hearing on Monday after its order for the Armed Forces of the Philippines to produce Maquilo rendered the AFP only last Tuesday.

Capt. Marlon Ongtu, of the Judge Advocate General's Office (JAG), informed the court that Maquilo had escaped and was told to formally explain to the court what happened on Monday.

Justice Conrado Vasquez Jr. stopped short the court's order and the Jags only on Tuesday. He said that was the second time that the National Bureau of Investigation served him an order from the court in a habeas corpus case.

"It would seem that they do not see the urgency of habeas corpus proceedings. He would just like to protect the idea of habeas corpus," Vasquez said.

Palace eyes amnesty for Oakwood mutineers

By Gil Cabacungan Jr.

MALACAÑANG yesterday said it might consider granting amnesty for the jailed rebel soldiers in the Oakwood mutiny if there is a strong public clamor for their pardon.

In a phone interview with reporters, Communications Director Silvestre Afable said: "If there is a groundswell of support especially from important institutions, then I guess it's time for the government to follow a closely with political leaders if this is possible."

Afable stressed that granting amnesty to the Oakwood mutineers has not yet been discussed at the "political level" although appeals by their amnesty have been forwarded to the Palace.

Leaders of the Catholic Church—Cebu Archbishop Ricardo Cardinal Vidal and Davao Archbishop Fernando Capalla—and the country's biggest business group—the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry—have recently submitted their separate appeals for amnesty to the Oakwood mutineers.

But Afable said granting the Oakwood mutineers amnesty would take time because existing rules on the grant of pardon cover only rebel groups such as the Moro Islamic Liberation Front and the New People's Army.

"This is a relatively new thing on the amnesty program. We are trying to gauge the political situation. The temper and sentiment of political leaders and we will act accordingly," Afable said.

The 300 soldiers involved in the mutiny have been detained in the Custodial Center at Camp Crame since their surrender on July 27, 2003.

"Is this an inadvertent mistake of our law enforcement agents? Is there lapse of our country's procedures? Is there a delight of fraud by the [narcotics]? And in all these 20 cases?" asked Cuenco.

He noted that the one raid that led to the actual filing of criminal charges was the one that involved a shabu laboratory in Mandaue City in Cebu province, which was raided on Sept. 20, 2004.

Charges have been filed against 11 people—nine of them foreigners—who were arrested in the said that netted 675 kg of shabu worth at least P1.3 billion.

The alleged mastermind, Cabin de Jesus Tan, managed to skip flying but was eventually arrested there. The government is now trying to get him extradited.

"I am stumped why the investigators, mostly in Metro Manila, did not include the filing of cases against owners of these laboratories and facilities when they are clearly liable as accomplices at the very least," Cuenco said.

He noted that the Mandaue laboratory that was dismantled by authorities was one of the biggest not only in the Philippines but also in Southeast Asia.

"Here in Manila and elsewhere, we do not only fail to implead them (the alleged masterminds), some names were even reported to have been exempted from the list," Cuenco said.

Cuenco noted that there are "glaring procedural blunders committed by our criminal justice system which include not only drug enforcement agents but also the prosecutors."

He urged the justice department to "immediately probe this matter and purge their ranks."

"Those slipshod prosecutors and rogue drug enforcement agents deserve not only outright dismissal and forfeiture of benefits and perpetual disqualification from government service but the gravest penalties we can apply from our existing statutes," Cuenco said.

Cuenco warned that unless the government implements a serious campaign against drug syndicates, "we may just wake one day to discover that we have already become another Colombia."

He suggested the government "use the Cebu style of prosecuting drug cases, if Manila lacks one or if it wants a combined model in dealing with these cases."

The 21 high-profile busts in 2004 led to the seizure of P1.3 billion worth of shabu, or methamphetamine hydrochloride.

The raids also led to the confiscation of various chemicals and shabu processors and equipment for shabu manufacture.

The Philippines has earned the dubious distinction of being one of the biggest manufacturers of shabu in the world.

INDICTMENT OF LAW ENFORCERS

Cuenco fumes over sloppy handling of big drug cases

By Carlos Pablo

AN ASSEMBLYMAN suspects that has asked the justice department to investigate the allegedly "slipshod" manner in which government authorities have handled the high-profile illegal drug cases last year and to purge the officials responsible.

According to Cebu City Rep. Antonio Cuenco (Lakas), vice chair of the House oversight committee on dangerous drugs, of the 21 raids of shabu laboratories and drug storage facilities carried out in 2004, only one led to the filing of criminal cases against suspected laboratory owners and drug syndicate masterminds.

"Is this an inadvertent mistake of our law enforcement agents? Is there lapse of our country's procedures? Is there a delight of fraud by the [narcotics]? And in all these 20 cases?" asked Cuenco.

He noted that the one raid that led to the actual filing of criminal charges was the one that involved a shabu laboratory in Mandaue City in Cebu province, which was raided on Sept. 20, 2004.

Charges have been filed against 11 people—nine of them foreigners—who were arrested in the said that netted 675 kg of shabu worth at least P1.3 billion.

The alleged mastermind, Cabin de Jesus Tan, managed to skip flying but was eventually arrested there. The government is now trying to get him extradited.

"I am stumped why the investigators, mostly in Metro Manila, did not include the filing of cases against owners of these laboratories and facilities when they are clearly liable as accomplices at the very least," Cuenco said.

He noted that the Mandaue laboratory that was dismantled by authorities was one of the biggest not only in the Philippines but also in Southeast Asia.

"Here in Manila and elsewhere, we do not only fail to implead them (the alleged masterminds), some names were even reported to have been exempted from the list," Cuenco said.

Cuenco noted that there are "glaring procedural blunders committed by our criminal justice system which include not only drug enforcement agents but also the prosecutors."

He urged the justice department to "immediately probe this matter and purge their ranks."

"Those slipshod prosecutors and rogue drug enforcement agents deserve not only outright dismissal and forfeiture of benefits and perpetual disqualification from government service but the gravest penalties we can apply from our existing statutes," Cuenco said.

Cuenco warned that unless the government implements a serious campaign against drug syndicates, "we may just wake one day to discover that we have already become another Colombia."

He suggested the government "use the Cebu style of prosecuting drug cases, if Manila lacks one or if it wants a combined model in dealing with these cases."

The 21 high-profile busts in 2004 led to the seizure of P1.3 billion worth of shabu, or methamphetamine hydrochloride.

The raids also led to the confiscation of various chemicals and shabu processors and equipment for shabu manufacture.

The Philippines has earned the dubious distinction of being one of the biggest manufacturers of shabu in the world.

MARK THE YEAR WITH A NEW EVEREST

Dad, treat your family to a brand new Ford Everest 4x2 this new year! Ford is offering you a special cash promotion of P25,000 or through low monthly payment plans for up to 60 months.

You may also opt for a 20% downpayment on all Everest 4x2s, or you an Everest 4x2 manual transmission for a special offer of P12,500.00 a month for a 5-year period.

In addition, Ford is also offering a limited accessorized variant on the Everest 4x2 called the Ford Everest Ascent. This just goes to show that being a daddy doesn't mean boring. So hurry, as there are only 30 units available.

Financing is offered by Ford Credit and dealer accredited banks on all Ford Everest 4x2 variants only until January 2005.

You may visit any of the Ford dealerships nearest you: Ford Alabang, Ford Balintawak, Ford Commonwealth, Ford EDSA, Ford Libis, Ford Makati, Ford Manila, Ford Quezon Avenue, Ford Shaw Blvd., Ford Bacolod, Ford Cabanatuan, Ford Cagayan de Oro, Ford Cavite, Ford Cebu, Ford Dagupan, Ford Davao, Ford Iloilo, Ford Pampanga, Ford San Pablo.

Luisita farmer accuses Noynoy's supporters

(Turn to page A2)

George Loveland, one of the wounded victims, testified during a Senate inquiry initiated by opposition Senators Joggy Enrile, chair of the Senate committee on labor and Justin Madrigal, chair of the human committee on youth, women and family relations.

Absurd

Aquino described the accusation as "absurd" when reached by the Inquirer yesterday.

"It's not. I have bodyguards. But they did not shoot anybody. But maybe during the camp- assignment during the time of my mother (President Corazon Aquino) did they shoot anybody," he said.

Violence earlier erupted at the Hacienda Luisita, a large sugar estate owned by Ms Aquino's family, following a deadlock in collective bargaining between the sugar workers' union and management. At least seven workers were killed and scores of others were injured during a peaceful dispersal involving soldiers and policemen on Nov. 16 last year.

Witness account

Loveland gave the following account of the latest clash in Filipino:

Three days earlier, or on Jan. 2, about 20 protesting workers came there manning the picket line. Suddenly, at about 4:00 p.m., a Mitsubishi Pajero with license plate No. TLA 719, which Aquino's men on board entered the hacienda.

One of them asked for his name, then advised him and other workers to report as a settlement. He also told them to be careful.

At about 11 p.m. on Jan. 5, he saw the same vehicle leaving the estate.

When the unidentified passengers rolled down the van's window, all hell broke loose.

The man who earlier talked with him started cursing the picketers as he and his companions allegedly fired the volleys.

He approached his and struck (by hand) with his gun, which exploded. I saw the fire over to his chest.

While the picketers ran for their lives, policemen who were in the vicinity did not do anything. They were just standing by.

One of the gunmen even went back and opened fire at one of the protesters. But I know them, that's their victim for his name plate number.

Under questioning by Enrile, Loveland said he could not recall the type of guns used because "I was shaken."

Aquino reaction

Aquino said he welcomed "the opportunity to answer in any forum this charge of my (s)."

"If I were contemplating a crime, perhaps the first thing I would do is planning it would be in remote that I get near few other committing the crimes," he said.

"It would patently absurd for me to advertise the fact in behalf to me or gunmen my employer at sugar (unless) to kill or publicize. Most long (he) workers I told me. As I said, I wasn't there or saw (a vehicle) and saw who are known to the public. I wasn't only be called a murderer but also an imbecile."

Addressing the witness, Aquino said: "Since I am not a party to his shooting in any manner, shape or form whatsoever, even a remote investigation so in his assertion will reveal to remove absurdity."

Police shocked

Loveland's testimony shocked police officials present during the inquiry.

Senior Supt. Angelo Reyes, police director in Tarlac, said he would look into the allegations although he said outside that the PNP had already assigned the investigation "because the family of the late victim requested the NBI (National Bureau of Investigation) to further conduct the probe so they decided to supply all the information needed."

Senator said that after the latest clash, "initially the police (officers) arrested the guys' none the ones had been released."

Four of them "were sleeping and two were awake because it was an overtime basis," he said. "They have to divide the time because we are only augmenting the blue guards of the Hacienda. In fact it was not really your jobs duty to run that gun."

But Loveland insisted that the policemen were with another. "They did not respond even when a negotiation was ongoing which could have prevented the incident. They were none the area of sector (the shooting incident)."

Senator declared that "In Hacienda Pastol was registered to a certain Dino delos Santos, of 6107 Ribon Circle, Guadalupe, Makati City.

Undersecretary

VICE President Noli de Castro with dead adopted eagle Kabayan.

Noli mourns 'Kabayan,' will adopt new RP eagle

By Jerome Aning

VICE President Noli de Castro yesterday said he was willing to sponsor the nurturing of another Philippine eagle despite the death of his adopted eagle "Kabayan" which died on January 6 at the Philippine Eagle Foundation (PEF) center in Mount Apo, Davao.

"I am sorry that this incident occurred to the young eagle Kabayan. Much has been done to achieve a breakthrough with regard to the conservation of Philippine Eagles," De Castro said in a statement.

Kabayan was reportedly electrocuted after perching on a high voltage power line at the Mount Apo National Park.

The Vice President said Kabayan's death should not be seen as a setback to the PEF's efforts in preserving endangered species but should urge more environmentalists to participate in conservation.

"As for me, I am more than eager to sponsor another eagle and to finally see more Philippine Eagles in the wild and not in endangered enclosure," De Castro said.

The eagle got its name from De Castro's nickname when he was still a newsman. The Vice President adopted Kabayan more than two years ago and sponsored all the eagle's food and maintenance expenses up to the time of its release in April last year.

De Castro underlined the contribution made by his adopted eagle in terms of the experimental release project of the PEF the purpose of which is to see more Philippine eagles in captivity under PEF's care that have yet to be released into the wild so that they could finally adapt to their natural environment.

The official urged the PEF to see what they have learned from Kabayan in their future experimental projects.

He said that since the PEF has now and observed the antics of a captive bred Philippine Eagle like Kabayan, it was now more equipped and capable to nurture and protect endangered species in their experimental releases.

Soon, experience the
Street of Dreams
at
CANYON RANCH

featuring
stunning brand-new custom homes,
cool fresh air and lush greenery, breathtaking views
from the elevated landscape, a viewing deck and a Visitor's Center.

A first-class gated residential community in Carmona with attractive California-inspired house and lot packages for as low as PhP19,810.00 a month.

CLOSE TO THE CITY. CLOSE TO NATURE. CLOSE TO YOUR HEART.

For inquiries, call:

CENTURY

818-9025 • 893-7050

DRIVING DIRECTIONS: Go to Santa Lucia Expressway, exit at Carmona, straight to Governor's Drive, turn left at the first corner towards Polo Complex and follow signs to Canyon Ranch.

Nangyayari ba sa 'yo ito:

- Lagnat
- Pananakit at pangangati ng lalamunan
- Ubo na may plema
- Napuputulan ng kuryente

Ang pagkilalanan ng lagnat, sakit ng lalamunan at ubo ay mga palatandaan ng isang sipon, ubod ng flu. Nakakaabala ito sa araw-araw na gawain.

Sa totoo lang, may mga gamot ang RiteMED para sa iba't ibang karamdaman at sintomas. Kaya hindi na magpa-apekto ang pang-araw-araw mo.

Para mabilis na mapag-aralan ang tamang gamot ng RiteMED para sa inyong karamdaman at kanyang kumbinasyon.

May alaalang gamot sa mandhang oki

RiteMED

You don't need diving lessons to see sharks and corals. Comfortable shoes will do.

Where now it feels to walk and breathe under water. Call your favorite travel agent now!

UNIQUELY Singapore

visitsingapore.com

THE MANILA CATHEDRAL: Destination for pilgrimage

Manila Cathedral as tourist attraction

By Blanche S. Rivera

FOR NOW it looms old and quiet over the city, standing as it did for centuries. But this year, the Manila Metropolitan Cathedral in Intramuros could be buzzing with people from all over the world.

The 400-year-old church, ravaged by at least six earthquakes and a world war and rebuilt eight times, is being prepared to become acknowledged as pilgrim setting as necessary with the Our Lady of Immaculate Conception.

Msgr. Nestor Cortes, rector of the cathedral, said he would launch a pilgrim and tourist ministry early this year to use the cathedral's worldwide fame for Christian evangelization.

The cathedral is the only church in the Philippines that has been elevated to Minor Basilica of the Immaculate Conception through the personal initiative of Pope John Paul II.

It has hosted the most important events in the country's religious history, including the installation of Cardinal Rufino Santos, the first Filipino Cardinal, and the visits of Popes Paul VI and John Paul II.

The original Manila Cathedral was a nipa hut built by a Dominican, Fray Domingo de Salazar, the first bishop of the diocese of Manila, in 1581, or 50 years after the Spaniards came to Philippine shores.

The wooden church was burned down in 1583, was rebuilt, then destroyed by a hurricane in 1588. The first stone cathedral was hit by an earthquake in 1599, and even while it was still being repaired, several earthquakes from the 1600s to the 19th centuries destroyed whatever improvement had been made. The seventh cathedral was bombed during the Liberation of Manila in 1945.

"It stands for the Philippine church. People all over the world know about it. It is not just a place for tourists, in fact people's cathedral," Cortes told the Inquirer in an interview.

"We want people to look at the cathedral not just as a building but [also] as a structure that symbolizes the birth of the Filipinos. The cathedral tells the story of the Filipino people's Christianity, how it spread to the country," Cortes said.

Cortes noted that many travel agencies bring tourists to the cathedral as part of their itinerary in Manila, the nation's capital. The cathedral has become a must-see for foreigners who want a feel of the old Manila.

Cortes said some of the tours even adjust their schedules so that the foreign visitors can attend Mass and thus briefly watch it.

The rector also placed donation boxes all over the cathedral because visitors would often ask him where to put their offerings or simply leave them in inconspicuous parts of the church.

"Sometimes, we would find money tucked in the statues of the saints. It's interesting, I didn't know there were many foreigners who visited the cathedral until I saw the many different currencies," Cortes said.

Judging by the currencies, the cathedral has had visitors from Argentina, China, Japan, Korea, Pakistan, Mexico, Brazil, United States, Canada, Singapore, the United Kingdom and other European countries, and even some parts of Africa.

These foreign guests would be the target of the cathedral's pilgrim and tourist ministry. While many of the visitors are Christians, there were also some Buddhists and Muslims.

"These are not just people from all walks of life, but people from all kinds of faith... We want to minister to tourists so that their visit here will not just be for taking pictures but for being involved in a spiritual encounter," he said.

Cortes said the pilgrim and tourist ministry was in accordance with the instructions of retired Manila Archbishop Jaime Cardinal Sin, who appointed him rector of the cathedral in 2003.

Sin, he said, told him to make the cathedral a model for all the churches in the Philippines and a venue for the social mission of the Catholic Church.

The Cardinal, who headed the archdiocese of Manila for 29 years, also stressed that the cathedral was "not a museum dictionaries but a place of encounter, a dwelling place of God and His people."

Cortes said that as a shrine for pilgrims, the cathedral would have a team of knowledgeable people who will tour the visitors and orient them on the history of the cathedral and the Catholic Church in the Philippines.

The priest, however, was still looking for people who would be trained to handle pilgrims and enthusiasts in the Catholic Church's history.

Cortes said he is also thinking of coming up with CDs and computer terminals that will make information on the cathedral immediately accessible to the visitors.

The Manila Cathedral launched its website last Dec. 8 to coincide with the feast of the Immaculate Conception.

Cortes is also raising funds for the major repairs and restoration needed in the cathedral, which is estimated to cost at least P15 million.

He said the cracks and rust destroying the adobe and steel structure supporting the cathedral roof [is dangerous if neglected] in a few more years.

"God will provide," Cortes said when asked where the money for the repairs will be sourced.

"People are really concerned about this cathedral. We will not let it go to ruin," he said.

The present structure of the Manila Cathedral will be 50 years old in 2008, another half century added to the glory of its past, a past which may not be quiet for long.

Lawyer who ratted on Marcos kills self

MIAMI—Richard Hirschfeld, a colorful confidant of leasing champ Muhammad Ali who implicated late dictator Ferdinand Marcos in a plot to return to power, killed himself in jail on Saturday, his lead upon most of the last eight years as a fugitive from the federal government.

Hirschfeld, 57, died on the same day authorities told his attorney that final arrangements had been made to move him to Norfolk, Virginia, for trial. He had been on this last for more than eight years until he was arrested in October in a closet at a lavish riverfront home in Fort Lauderdale.

Paramedics were called in the jail, and Hirschfeld was pronounced dead a short time later at a hospital, said Jill Bowen of Prison spokesperson Trish O'Brien. An hour he would not say how he killed himself.

"It was a real shock to us," said attorney Alvin Entin. "He seemed much more of a fighter than a person that had those kind of mental urges."

Hirschfeld accompanied Ali to the Middle East in 1985 in a highly publicized attempt to gain the release of American hostages in Lebanon. They later had a falling out over the legal rights to the boxer's life story.

Although IRS—denied it, federal prosecutors claimed Hirschfeld misused the boxer's voice on lobbying phone calls to US senators in the 1980s when the lawyer was driving a Rolls-Royce and living on a 50-acre (20-hectare) Virginia farm with the retired boxer.

Hirschfeld was representing ousted Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos when he secretly recorded their conversations about a plot for Marcos to regain power. Hirschfeld took the tapes to a congressional committee in 1987.

Hirschfeld was convicted of tax evasion and securities fraud charges in 1991, and was wanted on federal conspiracy charges when he was arrested last year. He faced up to 70 years in prison.

The conspiracy charges covered a scheme to be furloughed from prison after the 1991 conviction. AP

DOH going door-to-door on birth control campaign

By Blanche S. Rivera

THE P100-MILLION door-to-door family planning campaign of the Department of Health will push through next month to educate some two million target couples on responsible parenthood.

The campaign, dubbed Lipat-Buntis 2005, would run from Feb. 21 to March 23. It will entail the deployment of at least 15,000 health workers who will go from barangay to barangay starting with the poorest families.

This is the first time the government has embarked on an education campaign on family planning, applying the strategies used during the past Lipas-Tigdas campaigns.

The DOH announced yesterday that it was partnering with party-list group and population management advocate ALAGAD, a social circle of the government's national family planning program, for the unprecedented campaign.

ALAGAD, a known promoter of artificial methods, would join the Lipat-Buntis campaign to ensure that the government makes good on the agreement to educate couples on both natural and artificial family planning methods.

"We will send as many members (as possible) to partner with the health workers to make sure that the government goes by the agreement and that contraceptives reach the target couples," ALAGAD party-list Rep. Rodante Marcoleta said in a joint briefing yesterday.

Health Secretary Manuel Dayrit said that while the national government would not buy contraceptives for the campaign, it would allow the distribution of some P100 million worth of contraceptives, mostly pills, in its warehouses.

The contraceptives were donations from international agencies like the USAID and the UNFPA.

Dayrit said that 20 to 29 local government units have also expressed their willingness to buy contraceptives to be given away to their couple-beneficiaries under the artificial family planning.

ALAGAD, which claims a membership of six million poor Filipino nationwide, would help in identifying the couples need to family planning and targeting these couples.

Studies have shown the unmet need in the Philippines is around 30 percent, or some 2.5 million women, who want to limit their childbirths or space their children but do not know how.

Firm policy on population pressed

THE JOINT Foreign Chambers of Commerce have urged the Arroyo government to adopt a firmer population management policy to curb the rapid population growth from the current average of 2.36 percent to 1.9 percent sooner than 2030.

In a statement, the foreign chambers observed that no country has achieved developed economic status with a rapidly growing population. It noted that for the last three decades, a miracle increase in per capita income has meant the country's poverty rate remains one of the highest in Asia.

"If the population growth rate remains unchanged, the current estimated 2004 population of 84 million will reach 100 million by 2011 and double to 167 million by 2033," the statement said.

"Extensive poverty means weak consumer demand, underdeveloped human resources, low public sector revenue and possible social and political unrest, conditions which discourage new business investment," it added.

Congress on track for ₱80-B goal, says House leader

By Cynthia D. Balana and Carlito Pablo

ABOUT P65 billion of the P80 billion new revenues being targeted out of fiscal proposed new tax measures can now be attained, with the House of Representatives rushing the approval of a 2005 bill increasing the value-added tax to 12 percent.

Representatives from the majority bloc said the House was on track with its priority tax measures and saw no need for changes in its tax revenue agenda.

"We don't want to be misled by the number of tax bills since we are now looking at tangible amounts already," said Tañon Rep. Emil Lapus, chair of the House ways and means committee.

The P80-billion target was no longer a dream or pretension in the air but realizable, as the backbone of all projections, said Lapus.

The P65 billion in new revenues will come mainly from the "ten" tax, the lateral attrition bill, reconstitution of fiscal incentives and an amnesty bill, which make up a part of the administration's eight-fold tax revenue package.

Bicameral

The ten tax bill is now with bicameral conference committee which is trying to reconcile the Senate and the House versions of the measure.

Lapus said the bill containing by two percent the present 10 percent VAT rate up-pressed, would complete the picture and then meet the need fund requirement.

Sarlito, Malacañang said that instead of pursuing the passage of the eight tax measures that it had presented to Congress, it will be framing it up to the Legislature to decide which of the proposed bills to approve as long as measures were set forward by April.

Speaker Rep. Jose Souberbielle, the deputy speaker for Mindanao, said the House was ready to help meet the fiscal problem by enacting more tax or property revenue measures.

"The P80 billion target is realistic. House members have been working doubly hard to pass the needed tax measures on time to ease the deficit problem and avert a further credit down-grade by international rating agencies," he said.

He noted that majority of the congressmen were present during the three-day special session called by President Macapagal-Arroyo last week to allow the Senate to act on pending revenue bills rather approved by the House.

"We hope the Senate will complement the hard work shown by House members in passing urgent revenue measures to help ease the deficit problem," he said.

Lapus meanwhile rejected the charge by opposition representative Rod Biazon that the measures is heading the passage of the VAT bill.

He said the committee records would disprove the charge that no public hearings were conducted on the proposed measure.

He said three public hearings were called last year to enable seven concerned groups were invited and had participated in the discussions.

He said six hearings were also conducted on the proposed lifting of ZNT exemptions.

Party-list Rep. Liza Maza yesterday resigned from the ways and means committee and accused Lapus of allegedly railroading the bill's passage.

In a letter to Speaker Jose de Venecia, Maza alleged that the approval was rushed "to comply with the directive of Malacañang." She disclosed that no public hearings were conducted.

She said legislators should have been given enough time to consult their constituencies on a bill that "will impose additional heavy burdens on the people, on businesses and establish bad taxes on consumers, anymore a thorough discussion."

Lapus said he requested Maza's decision and noted that she would be departing her party, Gabriela, of a vote in the committee.

Rep. Ito Albano (LP, Bacon Sur), the joint vice chairman of the VAT bill, said he did not receive any letter from Maza during the last 8 and 9 hours of the ways and means committee when consensus was reached on the bill, when "she could have registered her objections."

"There were several meetings and four days made by the committee before a consensus was reached. There was no railroading to speak about," Empuso said.

Mandaluyong Rep. Benjamin Bellos-Fresco said Maza should not have resigned because the VAT measure was not the only piece of legislation affecting the farmers.

EMBARRASSED by BAD BREATH?

hth CALCIUM HYPOCHLORITE GRANULAR

GENERICS FACTORY PRICE

BEST and AFFORDABLE DEALS for 2005 OWN A FORD LYNX 1.6 GSI for as low as 65K D.P. MT + 70K D.P. AT P 12,942 MONTHLY

Heavy-Duty Cleaning? LEAVE IT TO THE PRO!

MAKATI EXECUTIVE TOWERS I & II P10,988 P5,288

Why Wait...? We advance the cash to get the look you've wanted BEAUTY LOAN

HK maids lose fight vs pay cut

By Blanche Rivera

FOREIGN domestic helpers in Hong Kong lost their fight against lower wages after the Hong Kong Supreme Court ruled that the reduced minimum wage for foreign maids and the new rules on their employers were lawful and reasonable.

The Philippine Overseas Labor Office in Hong Kong reported that the application for judicial review of the new wages and law filed by four Filipina domestic helpers and an Indonesian was dismissed by the Hong Kong court.

The report, dated Jan. 4, was submitted to Labor Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas by labor attaché to Hong Kong Rolando Manotoc.

After extensive hearings on 6 to 10 September 2004, Hon. Justice Hartmann ruled that the levy imposed on employers of HK$400 per month with effect on Oct. 1, 2003 and the reduction of the minimum allowable wage of foreign domestic helpers from HK$3,670 to HK$3,270 per month with effect from 1 April 2004 are both reasonable and lawful," Manotoc said in her report, citing salient points of the decision.

Manotoc said that the applicants were "hard" to appeal the decision within the next 28 days. The Hong Kong court handed down the ruling on Jan. 4.

The decision would affect around 150,000 Filipina domestic helpers working there. The biggest block of foreign house help working in the Chinese territory.

The Hong Kong court said that the petitioners, in the first place did not have the legal standing to challenge the levy and lower wages because they were not employers.

The court also stressed that the levy and lower wages were reasonable.

DIGITAL HEARING AIDS 30 Years of Audiology Practice

Opportunity knocks but once. JCB

DR. NELLY R. LEDESMA, the first & only Filipino Fellow of the American Academy of Audiology will conduct FREE HEARING TESTS in:

CEBU CITY January 18-15, 2005 Ledesma Audiological Center Cebu Branch

ILOILO CITY January 15-18, 2005 Ledesma Audiological Center Iloilo Branch

LEDESMA Audiological Center, Inc. The Nation's Largest Hearing Aid Sales Center

FOR ALL YOUR AUTO REPAIR AND SERVICE NEEDS... NAME IT! WE'VE GOT IT! Anson Auto Service Center LOWEST PRICE YOU EXPECT IN THE TIME YOU WANT DRIVE IN FOR A CHECK-UP! SEE THE DIFFERENCE AND FEEL THE RESULTS. OPEN MONDAY TO SUNDAY

WHO sends experts to RP to probe meningo cases

THE WORLD Health Organization (WHO) is sending two experts to help the country's health officials contain an outbreak of a deadly meningococcal disease, officials said yesterday.

Nineteen of 25 patients suspected of having meningococcemia have died since early 2004, the WHO's regional office in Manila said. Most of the cases were reported in Baguio City.

"This is an exceptionally high case fatality rate for meningococcal infection as we are treating the situation seriously," WHO country representative Dr. Jean-Marc Olivé said.

"However, we need to know how many of these suspected cases are really due to meningococcal infection and not to other causes," he said.

Health authorities said only two of the 19 who died were confirmed as having the disease, whose symptoms include headache, vomiting, stiff neck, rashes and fever.

Olivé said a meningococcemia expert is arriving in Manila late Wednesday from WHO headquarters in Geneva, while a lab specialist will arrive later this week to assist up to contain the disease.

"By fully understanding the extent of the problem, additional appropriate control measures can be undertaken," he said.

However, Olivé said there was a "very low risk of infection" for the public because the disease is spread only through very close contact or exposure for a long period of time.

Meningococcemia is endemic in the Philippines and many parts of Asia, but it rarely results in large outbreaks. The incubation period is usually two to 10 days. AP

Palace says Pinoys downed more beer last year

Front page A6

hasn't pressed to explain where Filipinos, including people belonging to low-income classes such as drivers and maids, were getting their money for cell phone pre-paid cards. "They probably get extra income," he said.

He said Smart Communication and Globe Telecoms must be making a killing from the shift in consumer preferences.

While President Macapagal-Arroyo monitors surveys from Social Weather Stations and Pulse Asia to get the pulse of the public, she also gets updates on surveys such as the consumer-oriented AC Nielsen report, according to Bunoan.

He said he came out with the AC Nielsen findings as consumer demand for "over-use" findings of which surveys that showed a downcast outlook on the economy and eroding public confidence in the Arroyo administration.

Bunoan bullish

With a budget deficit lower than expected last year, Budget Secretary Emilia Boncodin is also bullish about the prospects of the economy in 2005.

"In 2004, our national government deficit target was P307.6 billion. It looks like it would be under P300 billion," Boncodin said yesterday at a forum at Ateneo Professionals in San Juan.

"In fact last night, when we were looking at the numbers, it is anywhere between P285 and P287 billion," she said.

Boncodin said the soaring last year that the country was headed toward financial meltdand "nothing to be worried about."

"Now that we are all in a problem-solving mode—the Executive, Congress and others—I'm very much optimistic that 2005 will really be a much better year," she declared.

Customs exceeds target

Boncodin based this assessment on Fact Galvez—the government agencies' ability to exceed revenue targets in 2004 (which she hopes will be repeated this year), and the expected additional revenues from new taxes in 2005.

She said it appeared that the government had exceeded its revenue target for 2004 by P13 to P28 billion. "And that is the reason why I was able to pay up our debts," she said.

Boncodin said the Bureau of Customs and other agencies like the Land Transportation Office, the Bureau of Treasury and the Department of Foreign Affairs had exceeded their revenue targets.

But not BIR

Only the Bureau of Internal Revenue was "slightly below target," she said. "Their (2004) target for last year was P477 billion. If they fell on their target by say P5 billion to P4 billion, that is really... negligible," she said.

Yet Boncodin said there was cause did not mean that the country had already survived the crisis. The country is, in fact, "still running" one.

Not yet out of the woods

Explaining Ms Arroyo's statement last year that the country was not yet out in the middle of a fiscal crisis, Boncodin said: "What the President said is that we are not out of the deepest woods of the crisis. But we are not (yet) out of the fiscal problem. Definitely not. We still have steps ahead."

Salonga: GMA is impeachable for obstruction of justice

Front page A6

Inquirer Mega Inc.

"The only issue that is in (Congress) and Philippine law—obstruction of justice—which is an impeachable offense," Salonga said.

Salonga said he was "gratified" that Estrada was recovering well.

"But in a deeper sense, we are threatened by this breakdown in our system of justice and the almost total absence of the rule of law, despite assertions in the contrary of our highest officials from the judicial and executive departments of government," he said.

Revive rule of law

"What can the judiciary do now? Recoup and revive the rule of law, we insist, and we intervention this time. When Erap was brought to trial, everyone was tried. No other institution system of justice. Make no pound of our own judicial system," Salonga also said.

Estrada, who bore four charges of plunder involving nearly P5 billion in government funds, including excise tax for Tobacco Inc. is supposed to return home on Saturday (Diary on Page 4-11), after undergoing knee surgery operations at the Prince Edward Hospital and post-operations rehab at his hotel-like in the luxurious residential hotel, Parkview, Hong Kong.

While in Hong Kong, Estrada saw photographs being visited by his former Cabinet members as his hospital. He had also his barber flown to Hong Kong.

Salonga answered that Estrada's knee surgery would have been done here, as also asserted in a petition to the Supreme Court by the Special Prosecution Panel headed by Ombudsman and Tanodbayan Simeon Marcelo and Special Prosecutor Dennis Villa-Ignacio on Dec. 20, 2004.

He said even the Department of Foreign Affairs' immediate office in Hong Kong should have checked the rules on the issuance of license for DL Christopher Mon, Estrada's personal physician who had reportedly assisted that the operation be done in Hong Kong.

SALONGA: Letting Estrada go to Hong Kong violates law

"Was the entire government in a state of coma, beginning with the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), the Intelligence and even the alter personnel in the Office of the Ombudsman? How about Malacañang?" Salonga asked.

"There is one difference between President (Joseph) Estrada and the President—such as the "pray over and laying of hand" over Gloria by the ex-servants of Iloilo Villanueva, and the subsequent visit of Erap's Cabinet members in the Hong Kong hospital—are quite obvious, despite their disclaimers to the media."

"In the political game, what they do is more important than what they say," he added.

Estrada first asked permission from trust to travel for medical treatment on Nov. 30, 2004, but this was denied by the Special Division of the Sandiganbayan on June 3, 2002.

In December 2003, the Special Division of the Sandiganbayan granted Estrada's Urgent Motion for Permission to Travel to the United States for medical reasons.

Ms Macapagal's spokesperson even appointed on media saying that the government would help him secure a US visa.

But Estrada canceled his plans to help campaign for his former finally Fernando Poe Jr. in his presidential bid last May.

In October 2004, Estrada reversed his request to travel to Hong Kong for medical treatment.

OUSTED: President Joseph Estrada poses with his former Cabinet secretaries at the Hong Kong Adventist Hospital where he is recuperating from a knee-replacement surgery. The ex-President's wife Dr. Luisa Ejercito, Aborlan Bunoan, Jose Pardo, Gregorio Vigilar, Horacio Morales, Felipe Medalla and former Sen. Francisco Tatad.

GMA: I've full trust and faith in Noli not to jump ship

Front page A6

De Castro announcing the presidency should the Supreme Court decide against her, the President laughed heartily and said: "I have my full faith and trust in Noli de Castro. He would've run for president if he wanted to in 2004 and he chose to be my running mate and to support my administration."

De Castro, who was present during the reunion, did not respond when one of the hosts jokingly asked him to declare if he would run after only during another people power. De Castro left before the President's speech-drama was finished.

The President said she asked Ms Arroyo and Gutierrez, who was previously acting justice secretary, had served the Department of Justice for 16 years "without a stain of scandal."

She also said Gutierrez has the "stature to call anybody that she needs to call."

Pictured after ICAC

Ms Arroyo said Gutierrez would help her oversee the operations of the Presidential Anti-Graft Commission when the issues pictured after Hong Kong's Independent Commission Against Corruption.

The ICAC is headed by Gustavo de Gaetano, a former undersecretary at the Department of National Defense.

"We're adopting a lot of the methods, organizational setup, framework of the ICAC—investigation, prevention and education and are are doing that also in a comprehensive program and Tony Kwok is very much involved in that as a consultant," Ms Arroyo said.

Kwok, one of the founders of ICAC, first month held an anti-corruption workshop for Cabinet and sub-Cabinet officials in Malacañang where they came up with specific time-bound plans to cut graft and corruption.

Deputy ICAC was credited for turning around Hong Kong's reputation from being one of the most corrupt to one of the cleanest economies in the world. Ms Arroyo said Kwok will return to Manila next month to check on the progress in the anti-corruption front.

No general amnesty

Ms Arroyo said Kwok has not recommended the grant of a general amnesty on corrupt officials as Hong Kong did in 1974.

"He hasn't suggested that we have to do that here but there are many things that we have to do and these are the things that Mercy (Gutierrez) is overseeing. The PAGC is in the Office of the President and Mercy is the chief and she is helping me oversee their activities," she said.

Ms Arroyo said one of the important things to be done is to increase the number of graft investigators because the success of the prosecution depends not on lawyers but on the strength of the cases.

Can do it in 2 years

Ms Arroyo stressed that it took Hong Kong seven years before the establishment of the ICAC to rid itself of corruption.

"But Tony Kwok says that with our political will, what he has seen us doing and because our have been learning from mistakes of other countries, he thinks in fact that we can do it in three years but we have to have the political will and I ask all of you to help me with that political will," Ms Arroyo said.

Erap says burning of ABS-CBN van a warning to 'biased' media

Front page A6

TV crew to fix their doors on the pavement, and lobbed a Molotov bomb into the P35-million van. No one was injured, but expensive broadcast equipment inside the van was destroyed.

'Group K'

The gunmen escaped, and a caller identified "Group K" later claimed responsibility for the attack in an e-mail sent to media organizations, the group claimed to members were supporters of Pier who died last month. It accused ABS-CBN of "suppressing the truth" in the coverage of the May 10 presidential election that Pier lost to President Macapagal-Arroyo.

"That is the lesson to the media who are out-and-out or leaning distortionists to the public," Arroyo told the lawyers. "The people can angry about the media's dishonesty."

Mourning an oft repeated statement, he said: "You can fool the people some or some, but you can't fool the people all of the time."

Ironically, however, doubted whether Pier's supporters were behind the burning of the ABS-CBN van. "It could have been carried out by the police," he said.

Nobody injured, but expensive broadcast equipment inside the van was destroyed.

'Group K'

The gunmen escaped, and a caller identified "Group K" later claimed responsibility for the attack in an e-mail sent to media organizations, the group claimed to members were supporters of Pier who died last month. It accused ABS-CBN of "suppressing the truth" in the coverage of the May 10 presidential election that Pier lost to President Macapagal-Arroyo.

"That is the lesson to the media who are out-and-out or leaning distortionists to the public," Arroyo told the lawyers. "The people can angry about the media's dishonesty."

Mourning an oft repeated statement, he said: "You can fool the people some or some, but you can't fool the people all of the time."

Ironically, however, doubted whether Pier's supporters were behind the burning of the ABS-CBN van. "It could have been carried out by the police," he said.

ABS-CBN TV grab of the burning of its OB van at a gasoline station in Wack Wack, Mandaluyong City.

Nobody injured, but expensive broadcast equipment inside the van was destroyed.

'Group K'

The gunmen escaped, and a caller identified "Group K" later claimed responsibility for the attack in an e-mail sent to media organizations, the group claimed to members were supporters of Pier who died last month. It accused ABS-CBN of "suppressing the truth" in the coverage of the May 10 presidential election that Pier lost to President Macapagal-Arroyo.

"That is the lesson to the media who are out-and-out or leaning distortionists to the public," Arroyo told the lawyers. "The people can angry about the media's dishonesty."

Mourning an oft repeated statement, he said: "You can fool the people some or some, but you can't fool the people all of the time."

Ironically, however, doubted whether Pier's supporters were behind the burning of the ABS-CBN van. "It could have been carried out by the police," he said

Estrada coming home Saturday

Front page A1

overnight on Jan. 9 at his rented 2,700-square-foot flat at the Harbour in Hong Kong, after having dinner there for his family and his former Cabinet members and their wives.

The European-style Parkview is a luxury residential complex similar to the Hollywood service apartments in Makati City.

Estrada's rented flat is said to be one of the biggest in the luxury resort located inside the Tai Tam Country Park on 60 Tai Tam Reservoir Road.

The monthly rent for Parkview flats measuring from 773 to 2,067 square feet ranges from HK$58,000 to HK$150,000.

'Small matter'

Senator Estrada, the ousted President's eldest son, said his father's overnight stay at the Parkview was a "small matter" and had to do with an effort to cut down on hospital expenses.

"It's cheaper for us to stay in an apartment like once but I don't know how much the comparison, (of the expenses) if we will stay in the hospital until Jan. 15," he said in a press conference at the Senate.

Jinggoy described the 2,700-square-foot flat at the Parkview—which he said was five minutes away from the hospital by taxi—as a "simple apartment."

He said that at one point, the mother of Estrada, including himself, had to stay at the Parkview because recuperating rooms in the hospital were too congested.

He said a room at the Hong Kong Adventist Hospital cost more than HK$1,000, and he mentioned that the expenses incurred on his father's palace escorts.

Jinggoy said the high cost of the family's continued stay in Hong Kong was the reason for the decision to return to Manila, and not the "additional

HE'S NOT taking criticisms of his Hong Kong interludes lying down. Joseph Estrada is fighting right back saying that he is returning to back's "united opposition." "Hurry he is being interviewed by the Associated Press on Jan. 7 at the Hong Kong Adventist Hospital.

Continued on A10

Sandiganbayan

At the Senate, administration lawmakers deplored Estrada's perceived abuse of the temporary respite extended by the Sandiganbayan.

Bad precedent

Majority Leader Prospero Pegnadas said Estrada's penchant for high living was the reason for his neglect of his constant need for the court.

He said Estrada had clearly defied the court's order for him to stay at the hospital, and pointed out that such an act set a bad precedent if the court.

"His defiance of the court sets a bad precedent to others similarly situated and detained," Pegnadas said.

Davao Oriental Rep. Mayo Almario lamented that Estrada had been seeking special privileges from the court but was not responsible enough to observe its conditions.

"I find it highly ironic that there was initial speculation Mr. Estrada was putting together a shadow Cabinet. It seems from his actions that he was trying the going in for a fun party instead," Almario said.

GMA's compromise

Almario also asked the court to study reports that the deposed President had in fact stayed at the Parkview since his arrival in Hong Kong on Dec. 27 until Dec. 31, when the knee surgery was performed.

But Sandiganbayan Rep. Crispin Beltran said that Estrada's behavior was understandable on him, and that the drops had no one to blame for himself for it.

"Because of his deep fear and insecurity over the outpouring of grief over the loss of Estrada's best friend and former presidential candidate Fernando Poe Jr., President Arroyo, gave the thumbs-up to Estrada's trip to Hong Kong and waylaid all other political and political concerns and considerations," Beltran said, adding:

"If Estrada has clearly proven the upper hand of the government and he knows it. He has managed to keep a strong and measured support base precisely because the Arroyo administration has removed into unacceptable compromises with him and his allies."

The whole arm

Ruth Cervantes-Cuadra, one of the convenors of #SaveGMA60, said the movement that sent the former President had been getting from the Sandiganbayan, is assured that nothing could stop him from realizing the limits to had set.

"If you give (Estrada) a hand, he'll want to get the whole arm," Cuadra said in a phone interview.

She said that Estrada should not have been allowed to leave the country in the first place, and that there were many prisoners who also needed urgent medical attention.

Non-bailable

"What is he accused of? Isn't he accused of (plunder), a non-bailable offense?" Cuadra said.

#SaveGMA60 is one of the private complainants in the impeachment case filed against Estrada in 2000.

The impeachment eventually led to John II, the fourth anniversary of which will be marked on Jan. 20.

Also present were Pamela Cynthia E. Baldemor and Norman Bordadora

Pork Street

Jinggoy said that upon his return, the deposed President would want to stay at his own residence at Polk Street in San Juan, which is near hospitals with the necessary equipment for post-operation therapy.

He said that based on his experience, therapy was imperative to prevent blood clots.

"I have been operated in the knee also, and I had eight months of therapy," he said.

Should the Sandiganbayan refuse this request, Jinggoy said, the ex-President should have "continuous therapy" and stay in any one of three facilities: Cardinal Santos Medical Center, Makati Medical Center, or Asian Hospital.

He said the Veterans Memorial Medical Center was not an option because although "the doctors are qualified, and to say, the facilities and equipments needed for the therapy of my father are not there."

The young Estrada refused to say how much his family had so far spent for the trip and the operation.

"Tomorrow, I will know," he said.

Estrada ordered the withdrawal of the motion seeking an extension of his stay through a phone call to lawyer Jose Flaminiano, as the defense and prosecution panels were trading barbs on the issue.

Trading barbs

Defense lawyers were citing a letter from Estrada's American doctor, Christopher Shea, who had warned that there could be complications in the patient's recovery should he be moved from Hong Kong this early.

But Sandiganbayan prosecutor's copy of

GONZALES: Chokester of the bank.

Page A1

Palace indulgent toward Erap . . .

so let's just let that pass," Norberto Gonzales, chief of staff of President Macapagal-Arroyo, said yesterday in a phone interview.

Gonzales added: "What is serious is if he will not come back, but he's coming back on Saturday."

Rep. Gonzalez also had coordinated the arrangements for Estrada's trip to Hong Kong, his first overseas since he was forced to step down from office in 2001 on charges of massive corruption.

Assurance

Gonzales said he had received assurance from Estrada's camp that the deposed President would return as scheduled on Jan. 15 and head straight to his vacation house in Tanay, Rizal, where the Sandiganbayan had allowed him to stay while undergoing trial for plunder and perjury.

Both Gonzales and Silvestre Afable II, Malacañang's communications director, also brushed off rumors of a mobilization by forces aligned with Estrada.

The deposed President himself backed the speculation on his departure for Hong Kong last year, when he ordered his lawyers and said he would surely come back to lead a revolution against what he called "the reign of corruption and mismanagement."

Further fanning the rumors were reports and photographs of the visit of his former Cabinet officials to his room at the Hong Kong Adventist Hospital, and the supposed meeting of members of the opposition faction "United Opposition" on Tuesday night.

But Afable ruled out the occurrence of an uprising against his forces, saying present conditions were not ripe for it.

Taking Estrada's word

"Moreover, President Estrada himself has been saying that he has no intention to get involved in destabilization, and that what he only wants is to form a united opposition," Afable said, adding:

"We take his word that he's not going to engage in any destabilization, and I don't believe he will be so engaged.

"We think he has a right to unite the opposition as he says, and we welcome this plan and we think that's good for our democracy."

Gonzales said Malacañang was not worried by the reported meetings of the opposition, "as long as they do not engage in destabilization."

"If all they want to do is have a united opposition, that's within our democratic system and we welcome that," Gonzales said.

Not spent force

Afable, however, contended that Estrada was not yet a spent force.

"Not really," he said in response to a question. "President Estrada still has a lot of followers. Objectively speaking, there is a reservoir that believed in him."

Gonzales, for his part, said Malacañang was confident that the administration could withstand the threats.

"We have no choice but to be confident," he said.

Proning Chavit wrong

He noted that Estrada's doctors had earlier said that the knee-replacement operation was "life-threatening," and that the patient would take long to recover.

"Unfortunately for the Sandiganbayan, it had become all," he said.

Asked about Estrada's true reason for withdrawing the motion, Jinggoy said the ex-President only wanted to prove his critics—including Vilma Ignacio and Boots Del Castillo ("Chavit" Singson—wrong.

"What's important is that in four days, Villa Ignacio and Singson will be proven as false prophets of doom. They were the only ones who were saying he would escape," Jinggoy said, adding that they "should resign" out of defeatism."

Interviewed after the hearing, Jinggoy denied by his argument that Estrada should have been allowed to stay because it was "very difficult to recuperate" a medical judgment.

"Let's just hope and pray that there will be no complications because if there is one, we will not what will be the proper spirit of Dr. Dennis Villa Ignacio," he said.

Shocked by comment, Jinggoy said Estrada was screaming only because the public had been warned about his planned flee to China.

"He would have fled via China by now had we not seen through his plans," Jinggoy said.

Front page A1

Erap barber flew business class to HK

President said.

Bondoc, he said, Philippine Airlines was offering a "buy one, take one" promo, and he took the chance of getting his barber to fly with a member of his staff, lawyer Rolando Ramirez.

The business checked out the supposed PAL promo and learned that the special fares from Manila to Hong Kong, Honolulu, Los Vegas, San Francisco or Los Angeles, and Singapore applied to first class and Mabuhay (business) class.

For the Manila-Hong Kong promo, a round-trip Mabuhay class ticket costs P68,840 (or P44,220), the economy class goes for P464 (or P25,496).

Barber not spared

Estrada expressed disappointment and dismay about why the income received from concealing him and blessing him for everything.

"There is a big problem in the economy ... corruption in high places, and are you from your senses for or no. You are not in your business bonding and you did not even spare my barber," he said, adding:

"Me parati ang pinapatulan (I'm always being targeted.) Demand it. Sacan.

Cops reporting on HK whoopee to be probed

Front page A1

right for the courts to allow their charge to leave the Hong Kong Adventist Hospital where he is recovering from knee surgery stay overnight elsewhere, or even host a dinner for his former Cabinet officials who had flown in for a visit.

After that, we will ask the Sandiganbayan what punishment we can slap against the actors," Aglipay later told the Inquirer. "If the authority is given to us, we will investigate and see what punishment we can give within our authority."

No way

It apparently did not matter to Aglipay that it was the police escort in Antipolo who had called his attention to Estrada's purported violation of the Sandiganbayan conditions governing his stay in Hong Kong.

Having been given strict orders by the court, the escort should not have allowed Estrada to receive visitors out of the hospital, Aglipay said, adding:

"When the court says 'No way' it means no way," he said.

Aglipay also said Morales and company could not make excuses like "technicality" to the ousted President's wanted visitations.

"They're no rookie policemen. They have with them a police colonel, so they should have known what to do," he said.

The WORLD

Editor Lawrence B. Quisco

Nationwide polls in Iraq impossible–Allawi

TIKRIT, Iraq—Prime Minister Iyad Allawi admitted Tuesday that some parts of Iraq would not be able to take part in elections in three weeks' time as deadly strikes killed at least 20 people, six of them in a car bombing in Saddam Hussein's hometown of Tikrit.

"There are some pockets that will not participate in the election but they are not large," Allawi told reporters.

The 20 leaked premier vowed to spend $13 billion this year to bolster the security forces into intensifying their fight against a bloody insurgency in a country long that has cost thousands of lives.

"When our forces are capable of taking over the war against the insurgents, we will be able to begin discussions with the multinational forces on the Iraq army taking over the lead role in maintaining security in Iraqi towns," he said.

The insurgency has been fanned by widespread resentment among the Sunni Arab elite, which dominated Saddam's regime and all previous Iraqi governments, that the new parliament will be dominated by the long-oppressed Shiite majority.

Allawi said the insurgency had cost Iraq more than $10 billion in sabotage against oil and power infrastructure alone.

In the latest assaults on Iraq's oil distribution network, rebels blew up a pipeline near the northern oil terminal of Kirkuk once an ethnic, officials said.

As the clock ticked down to polling day on Jan. 30, sectarian violence marred the campaign with the prime minister's Iraqi National Accord party crying foul over the alleged use of religion by Shiite politicians.

The INA lodged a formal complaint against the Shiite joint list, the United Iraqi Alliance (UIA), for violating state law by using religion in its advertising.

The party also accused Shiite militias of intimidating voters ahead of the poll.

Tuesday's bombing in Tikrit targeted a police station and came a day after Baghdad's deputy police chief was assassinated.

All of the casualties were police, the US military said.

Militants loyal to Iraq's most wanted man, al-Qaeda operative Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, also carried out the bombing, in an internet statement.

In the Sunni hub immediately south of the capital, dubbed the triangle of death because of the frequency of rebel attacks, three Iraqi civilians were killed during a grenade attack on a roadside bombing near Fanathaya, witnesses and a hospital source said.

The bombing apparently targeted a US military convoy but the casualties were on a passing minibus.

North of Baghdad, five Iraqi soldiers and a civilian were killed in Abu Ghraib al-Tampani, said a US statement, recaptured from insurgents in a US-led assault in Operation police said.

An Iraqi translator for the American was shot dead near the main northern city of Mosul, while two police officers were killed by gunmen in the capital, police said.

Further west, two Iraqi civilians were killed by insurgent fire near the notorious US-run Abu Ghraib prison, the military said. AFP

New anti-AIDS campaign uses cartoon condoms

UNITED NATIONS—A new global campaign to stop the spread of AIDS uses three animated characters dressed as condoms to deliver a serious message in humorous public service spots in 41 languages. If you're going to have sex, use a condom.

The short spots are being offered free to broadcasters, community groups and universities and have the potential of reaching 80 percent of the world's population, Canadian producer-director Stefanie Kharas said Tuesday.

"We're using humor to stop the spread of AIDS," he told a news conference launching the public service announcements which are targeted at young people aged 15 to 24 in places threatened by the epidemic, including India, China, Russia, the Caribbean and central Asia.

"The Three Amigos"—as the cartoon condoms named Shark, Smooth and Dick are called—are pictured in a variety of settings from a spaceship to a movie. Build on a motorcycle. Twenty different spots are available in each of the 41 languages and they vary in length from 10 to 60 seconds, with some quite blatantly sexual and others much more restrained to appeal to different audiences.

The punch line in the spaceship spot says "No condom, No Shuttle" to stop the spread of AIDS." The movie spot says: "You just can't score without protection." And the spot featuring on a motorist related in a casino says: "Not all gamblers realize the odds stacked against them. Don't gamble with your life. Use a condom. Stop the spread of AIDS."

Kharas said the idea for the spots came from his co-producer Jouels Idrissa Bâ in native Bissa Quite, who believes as he does that AIDS is "a preventable disease," and that using animated figures and humor can get the message across that condoms are essential for safe sex. AP

Nasa to explore innards of comet

CAPE CANAVERAL—For the first time ever, Nasa is setting off on a collision course with a comet, in hopes of blasting a huge hole in the celestial snowball and gazing upon the original ingredients of the solar system preserved inside.

In all begins with a planned 'Deep Impact' day launch of Deep Impact, a copper-for- rifled, comet-hunting spacecraft.

Nasa has a single second—at precisely eight seconds past 1:47 p.m.—to send Deep Impact on a 431-million-km, six-month voyage to Comet Tempel 1. Good weather is forecast, cheering scientists who are up against a 10-in two-week deadline for launching the probe.

Scientists have no idea what Comet Tempel 1 looks like. They don't know whether the spacecraft will have to punch through a crust as hard as a concrete sidewalk or as flimsy as coat flakes.

All they know with certainty is that the nucleus, or core, of the comet is three times as long as it is wide, and that they must crash into the moth mile-in-diameter picture of the vanishing crater and all the ice, dust and other primordial matter shooting out of the hole. July 4.

Uncertainty over the comet's shape "has caused us some concern about, can we hit the comet," said Jay Melosh, a planetary geologist at the University of Arizona. Officially, Nasa puts the odds of a hull's-eye at better than 50 percent.

"We hope we'll make a crater... perhaps 300 feet in diameter, 100 feet deep, that we'll get through that crust and reveal the interior of the comet," Melosh said Tuesday. "But we don't know what comets are made of. We don't know how strong they are."

This $330-million mission should provide those answers, along with clues to the origin of the solar system 4 1/2 billion years ago.

Because of the relative speed at the moment of impact—37,000 kph—no explosives are needed for the job. The force of the smashup will be the equivalent of 4 1/2 tons of TNT going off. AP

Asian quake, tsunami death toll nears 159,000

JAKARTA – The death toll from last month's earthquake and tsunami that devastated Indian Ocean coastlines rose to 159,000 Wednesday as relief workers added another 5,000 dead to the tallies.

Indonesia, hardest-hit by the Dec. 26 wall of water, has now reported 106,533 deaths, with 12,647 people missing, up exclusive of more than 2,000 from Tuesday, the initial silence maternity said.

Aid workers on the ground say many more bodies are yet to be collected.

In Sri Lanka, the toll stands at 30,723 confirmed dead, the government said. The number of people reported missing jumped from 4,098 to 5,903, latest government figures showed.

In neighbouring India, the official toll stood 13,193 with 5,629 still missing and feared dead.

The death toll in Thailand Wednesday rose by four to 5,313, but the number of missing continued to slip, down 20 to 3,196, including 1,078 foreigners and 2,247 Thais.

Burma's (Myanmar) Prime Minister Soe Win said Thursday 59 people were killed in the tsunami and more than 3,200 left homeless. This was down from the 5,000 estimated Feb.

At least 82 people were killed and another 26 were missing in the Maldives, a government spokesperson said.

Forty-eight people were dead in Malaysia, most of them in Penang, according to police, while in Bangladesh a baboon and child were killed after a tourist boat capsized in huge waves, officials said.

Fatalities also surprised on the east coast of Africa where 298 people were declared dead in Somalia, 10 in Tanzania and one in Kenya.

The US Geological Survey said the earthquake west of the Indonesian island of Sumatra measured 9.0 on the Richter scale—making it the largest quake world-wide in four decades.

The number of foreigners confirmed by their countries of origin as having died in the tsunami stood at 400 Tuesday but thousands of others were reported as missing, believed dead, and many more were unaccounted for.

The confirmed death toll was expected to rise as new identifications were completed and missing persons were declared dead.

In Thailand, where the biggest numbers of foreign tourists were holidaying, the interior ministry said that there were 1,132 foreigners among the 3,370 people still reported missing. AFP

Death tolls by country:

Indonesia	106,533
Sri Lanka	30,882
India	10,191
Thailand	3,291
Somalia	298
Burma	90
Maldives	82
Malaysia	68
Tanzania	10
Bangladesh	2
Kenya	1

'Cosmological ruler' helps measure the universe

SAN DIEGO – By looking at a vast swath of sky, astronomers said on Tuesday they have figured out a way to measure the universe – using a kind of "cosmological ruler."

They found that the universe is flat, with ripples that began as the tiniest excursions in radiation left over from the Big Bang, which in turn encourages billions gave birth to the universe.

In a method akin the mega-equation some 13.7 billion years ago, the infant universe was actually making a sound and scientists produced the ripples, said Daniel Eisenstein, an astronomer at the University of Arizona.

The way galaxies are scattered across the sky now corresponds to the sound waves in the early times of the cosmos, Eisenstein told reporters at a meeting of the American Astronomical Society.

"We regard this as standing gas evidence that gravity has played the major role in growing from the initial seeds in the microwave background. [It's] not from the Big Bang) into the galaxies and clusters of galaxies that we see around us," he said.

"The most exciting thing from my point of view is the signature of these wiggles in the galaxy distribution... may be very useful as a cosmological ruler," said Richard Ellis of Caltech. Optical Observatories. Reuters

Frenchwoman bids to row solo across Pacific

FRANCE'S Maud Fontenoy stands on her boat in Lima's Port Callao. She will row solo across the Pacific from Peru to Tahiti in jan. 13. REUTERS

CALLAO, Peru – Frenchwoman Maud Fontenoy, the first woman to row the Atlantic from west to east, embarks on Wednesday on her latest "fabulous adventure" – to row solo 8,000 km across the Pacific from Peru to Tahiti.

Fontenoy, 37, will follow the route taken by Norwegian explorer Thor Heyerdahl's epic 1947 Kon-Tiki expedition on a flimsy balsa raft that tried to prove the South Sea Islands could have been settled by an ancient race from thousands of miles to the east.

Frenchwoman Raphaela le Goaziou sailed to the same route in 2000 but Fontenoy says no one has ever successfully rowed it.

Fontenoy will be completely alone in the sea without any support boats trailing her on the epic trip.

"It's a challenge a little women on a little boat. I want to make this adventure really accessible by trying to make it as simple as possible," Fontenoy said at the rowing club in Lima's port, Callao, from where she will set off.

"I love your figures! how to row, there ain't a lot of money involved, it's just a simple story everyone can understand."

Fontenoy will pack all in her starter boat Orion—which looks like a cross between a racing car and a rocket, only with a sliding seat and oars in the middle—at around 4 p.m. on Wednesday in the summer boat begins its drop.

She expects the journey to take five months. "I know it's going to be a fabulous adventure."

By coincidence, a replica of the Kon-Tiki raft will cross into Heyerdahl's expedition this year, setting out from Callao in April to study oceanic currents in the current.

One end of Fontenoy's 7.6-by-1.60-metre craft is a tiny cabin. The other—measuring about one cubic metre—will be her home where she is not rowing.

Because of the heat in the southern hemisphere summer, she expects to row in the evening and at night.

And big enough for a sleeping bag, a kettle, key navigation gear and a satellite phone, Fontenoy will spend her days in its tender of arrows, with three books for company.

She has promised to keep a log of her journey will be posted on her website "www.maudfontenoy.com." Reuters

WorldBriefs

Sharon congratulates Abbas

JERUSALEM (UN) – Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon phoned Mahmoud Abbas on Tuesday to congratulate him on his election as Palestinian president and offer cooperation, the highest level contact between the sides in nearly four years. Abbas' predecessor Yasser Arafat had spoke to Sharon by telephone in February 2003 to congratulate him on his election victory. Within Palestinian parliament, Sharon acknowledged by official Arabic, calling him as "condolences." Sharon's office said he spoke with Abbas for 10 minutes and extended the Israeli-Arab election victory via a platform of some evidence. "He wished him success and he then agreed they would talk again soon," it said in a statement. A senior government official spoke Sharon as telling Abbas "I am offering you our cooperation." He said Sharon and Abbas spoke about a meeting in general terms but no dates are set. In Washington, a US official said it was "positive and encouraging" that both sides were talking to each other. Reuters

New Canada mad cow case

OTTAWA – Canada said Tuesday it had detected a fifth case of mad cow disease, and for the first time the infected beef overseas borrowed a ban on meat and beef introduced in 1989 to check the spread of the disease. The discovery came as the United States threatens market for Canada's farmers, on the verge of lifting restrictions on cattle. Canada as cattle-confined imports, imposed after a first case of mad cow disease was in 2003. Washington said it would send a team of experts to assess the latest discovery even as Canadian officials downplayed the case. The Canadian Food Inspection Agency said the part of the 7-year-old animal from the northern province of Alberta showed no evidence of spongiform encephalopathy, or "mad cow" disease, had entered the human food chain. But the discovery, just 10 days after officials confirmed the previous case of the disease, was another humbling blow for the Canadian beef industry which lost billions of dollars over the issue last year. AFP

New homeland security chief

WASHINGTON – US President George W. Bush on Tuesday nominated federal judge Michael Chertoff, a former prosecutor and architect of the controversial Patriot Act after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, to become secretary of homeland security. After the delay in considering the nomination of former Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, Bush announced Chertoff, who already withdrew from consideration a month ago, in the face of more uncomfortable personal revelations. Chertoff, a US appeals court judge in Philadelphia, appeared to have a safe choice. Bush praised his breadth of experience and his reputation as a tough but fair judge. Chertoff's confirmation would bring a veteran of the US legal response to the Sept. 11 attacks to head the 180,000-employee department charged with guarding the country against a repeat. "In the days after Sept. 11, Mike helped take the fight to the enemy," Bush said. Reuters

Search for WMD in Iraq ends

WASHINGTON – The search for weapons of mass destruction in Iraq ended last month, nearly two years after President George W. Bush went to war to disarm Saddam Hussein. The Washington Post reported on Wednesday. Officials who served with the group charged with locating banned weapons said the violence in Iraq, coupled with a lack of specific information, led them to stop the effort shortly before Christmas, the newspaper reported. Charles Duelfer, the CIA special adviser who led the hunt, has returned home, and analysts serving in the Iraq Survey Group (ISG) have returned to CIA headquarters in Virginia, the report said, citing unnamed intelligence officials. The Post quotes findings of an interim report that Duelfer submitted to Congress in September will stand as the ISG's final conclusions, according to a senior intelligence official. Reuters

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

THURSDAY, JANUARY 11, 2001

INQUIRER

OPINION

Publisher [illegible]
Editor-in-Chief [illegible]
Managing Editor [illegible]
Associate Editor [illegible]
Associate Editor for Readership [illegible]
Opinion Editor [illegible]
International [illegible]
City Editor [illegible]
Assistant Circulation [illegible]
Chief Photographer [illegible]
Art & Design Director [illegible]

Executive Vice President [illegible]
President [illegible]
Senior Vice President for Sales and Marketing [illegible]
Senior Vice President for Corporate Services [illegible]
Vice President for Finance [illegible]
AVP for Circulation [illegible]

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means without prior written permission from the publisher.

Joking?

IF it were a song, the "accomplishments report" Vice President Noli de Castro handed out to the media last Sunday would have sounded offbeat and out of tune. He trumpeted particularly his achievements as chair of the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council, as presidential adviser for OFW concerns and as price control czar.

EDITORIAL

At his direction, he said, the specialists of the government's key shelter agencies [HSAs]—the Home Development Mutual Fund or Pag-IBIG Fund, Home Guaranty Corp., National Housing Authority, National Home Mortgage Finance Corp., and the Housing and Land Use Regulatory Board—were streamlined and simplified, their collection efficiency improved and their systems of delivering service made more responsive. On top of these, he said, he directed the efficient disposal of the HSAs' nonperforming assets to make them more viable and self-reliant.

We must give it to the Vice Presidents that he undertook what the HSAs were do to live up to their mandates. But directing them to do what they ought to do is definitely out our idea of accomplishment. We still have to know how much better the HSAs are performing now because of the Vice President's orders. It would have certainly cheered the public to hear about and, better still, see the concrete, positive outcomes of those orders.

De Castro cited the P15 billion in Pag-IBIG funds loaned to housing developers. Even as we have yet to see how effective the loans have been in addressing the country's housing needs, we cannot help but recall the P253-million Pag-IBIG loan extended to the real estate firm of Mike Velarde, the leader of the Catholic charismatic group El Shaddai, who supported De Castro and the President's candidacies in last year's elections. The single biggest drawdown in the history of the Pag-IBIG Fund looked no different from a political payback. Meanwhile, the HUDCC that he chairs projects that 3 million new houses would have to be built in the next five years to completely eliminate the housing backlog.

As Palace adviser on OFW concerns, De Castro boasted of his trip to Libya where he got a commitment from the Libyan government to hire more Filipinos and resume the RP-Libya Joint Committee Meeting and the RP-Libya "oil talks." Of course, we would like to see that this announcement will not remain in the realm of all-talk-no-action. And we will certainly be happy if something comes out of this deal with Libya.

De Castro also said he had submitted to the President his recommendations on what to do with the 98,000 or so Filipino workers performing duties [OPAs] in Japan, who are now facing sudden unemployment because of a new Japanese law. At this point, it should be clear to the public what's on Mamie if nothing is done about the OPAs' problems. And we are at least assured that we don't have just a "square tire" waiting in the wings.

The most astonishing by far among the Vice President's many wonderful accomplishments in his six months of holding public office was "keeping [the] supply and prices of basic commodities stable last Christmas." For sure, these were still loads of Christmas goodies in the grocery stores way past New Year's Day but this was not because some high public official was able to keep the supply lines working. This was more because higher prices had weakened Juan de la Cruz's buying power. Either that Vice President hasn't been to a market for a long time, or he was there just one time last Christmas so that he didn't have any way of making meaningful price comparisons.

As far as we can recall, this is the first time a vice president felt the need to submit his own accomplishment report to the Filipino people. It's not that it is totally wrong; since Filipinos would certainly appreciate knowing that public money is not being wasted on maintaining the Office of the Vice President. But it does seem strange, if not inappropriate, for an administration Vice President to make public his own accomplishments. After all, isn't his accomplishments also the accomplishments of the President and her entire administration, and therefore fit for inclusion in the President's "Gift to Repeat" Now, if he were an opposition vice president, a separate report might have been understandable.

But then, going by the contents of his accomplishments report, the Vice President could have been joking.

Cellar status

VIEWPOINT

Jose L. Mercado

WOE should one live a mad life. Are lives are up because the latest international Mathematics and Science tests reveal Filipino students handled, yet again, among the last-ranked. Assumed between Morocco and Botswana, our kids limped in putting our country at No. 41 among 46 countries in Math. In Science, we trailed behind Lebanon but was ahead of Botswana at No. 42.

Asians were again topnotchers. Singapore, as we had, followed by kids from Korea, Hong Kong, Taipei and Japan. Indonesia was ahead of us under 36.

So, what do we scramble out of this cellar? We've been stuck in this locker room since the release in 1966 of the first TIMSS results. Then educators "were shocked because among 41 countries, the Philippines ranked second in Math and third in Science"—but from the bottom, until the United Nations Philippine Human Development Report.

When the second TIMSS results came out three years later, we still hadn't budged from the basket. At 37th place, we were second to the last.

The shows started 45 years back, when we shipped seventh graders. Obviously, the test can't be screened overnight.

Our kids got 10 years of basic schooling, much of it of sub-standard quality. Other nations provide 15, sometimes 16, years. Even poorer Asian countries like Myanmar, Laos and Cambodia support 11 years.

Good schools do not come cheap. Singapore spent $1,282 per school kid while the first TIMSS were held. We allocated $140.

So where did this "free education for the Filipino" come from? "I recalled a California writer on Filipinos, Antonio Isidro, quoting Pinoy," "Let's get real because without education, we can't make headway given international competition, cutting to Pinoy: Can you stone-throw?"

That hunting is underacceptable. Schools that don't educate educate Filipinos abroad. On

I titled "Go Lonely" during the holidays, and I've been collecting them "LO" since then. "LO," as I've learned from my kids, means "fast-using emoticons," the phenomenon of text messaging or chatting in a new computer age. Keep mind until you go bonkers. The song may be a commercial you just heard on the radio, a people kiddy tune like the kind you hear in a carousel, or a passage from one of Sade's side collocations, the kind you just found on your car stereo. To be "LO" is to be "out of it," to be "wasted," the Pedazo of those times kept going round and round in my brain for some time sometime ago, particularly as played by Yu ya Ma.

That title, it's the song, "Every Time We Say Goodbye." The movie version was supplied by Natalie Cole, a sumptuous rendition (Natalie finally starts a small place among the greats, which include her father Nat. Quite invidious). The movie features interpretations of the songs by contemporary artists, including Robbie Williams ("It's So Lonely"), Elvis Costello ("Let's Do It, Let's Fall in Love"), Sheryl Crow ("Begin the Beguine"), Mama Kroll ("Just One of Those Things"), and several others. They give fresh twists to the songs, some de-bowie, others, well, de-bowie-ish-ebbie.

The "LO" song I wanted is about Cole Porter, and the songs in it are his songs. Songs that have survived the turmoil and tsunami of the last century by their poignancy and wit. Songs believed by people like Nick Joaquin, who knows every turn and phrase the way map readers know every gully and gulch of the terrain they know. So, more than that, who understood their moments the way lovers understand the intricate meanings of sighs and gestures.

I remember again hearing a friend of mine was taken by me singing to "The Stars and Bob responded a Little Porter song, any Cole Porter song, and he was at a loss to offer one. Ah, how strange the change from generation to generation.

I'm glad at least that over the last few years there's been an invasion in popular music of something other than "acoustic," which is becoming a Canadian, grandmother Sesame Fanatics e-mailed how she still helps relatives study to break free from the penury she knew in Marikina. "Baby names give privacy, as educators use email media (We parents use lines for spending of our children)."

"These statistics are about as grim as they can be," Dr. Ismajio Lacsamana in Florida writes. "Our teachers in Pampanga and Subic public schools were well qualified, particularly in English, Mathematics and Sciences. So what went wrong?"

Teachers are one factor. It's a pity President Macapagal-Arroyo's agenda does not find improving education as one of the top priorities. In America, there's a constant push to upgrade educational standards. We must reverse our downward spiral. The country's future hinges on education.

Today's 600,000 plus teachers make teaching the country's largest professional occupation. Teacher training and dropping away non-teaching job-requisite priorities.

"My fiancé is Grade 6 right after I finished 2nd year high, so I experienced the differences," Grace T from Toronto writes. "In the Philippines, we memorized answers and were spoon-fed. Here, you state the math you get... If students will become laborers, does it matter what math they get? Why is this passing math 75 percent when in reality it's only 50 percent? So whose fault was it that we did so poorly in the high school mathematical test? Isnot it?"

Yes, it's an issue. Last May, 700,000 of 1.4 million kids who got elementary school diplo-

mas flunked the High School Readiness Test, the Cebu City, all-D elementary schools failed.

"The massive majority of those enrolling in first year of public high schools know only 27 percent of what they were to have learned in elementary school," the outgoing Council of Private Educational Associations (Capea) pointed out.

Members did so purely in a qualifying exam for school principals, "teachers made the cutoff point only after education officials lowered the passing rate of the 200-item test from 150 to 130."

Still, in the Philippines, Other nonsense insist additional knowledge be gained. Here, we shove down the standards instead.

This is educational dopsy-boom. Grades are padded (sing-ding), as the ranks of flunkers are thinned out (below.) So "passing," knowledge gaps remains and the illusion of passing is kept. The result is a flunker's crescendo.

"Where are we kidding?" the IBS Human Development Report asks. "Our first two evil, top years in the Philippines are often regarded as the equivalent of third and fourth year high schools" in other countries, says Capea. "The first-year college student in most college courses are, as a remedial course on high school English, Mathematics and Science."

A pass-as-any-cost syndrome spills delusion over generations. Trouble to send or communicate, half-literates spoof dominant diplomas that can't get them jobs. Videos pirated from like Cebu City Mayor Tomas Osmeña's notebooks with his ring photo, submitted by taxpayer money are useless.

Needed are coordinated and structured educational reform from bridge programs to adequate funding. They can be postponed only at calculated cost.

"The best investment we should be for those in the worst of social conditions," Harvard's John Kenneth Galbraith notes. The alternative is a "surrender to voices of ignorance and error."

(E-mail: jlmercado@pacific.net.ph)

Every time we say goodbye

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

"standards" being sung by young musicians. I put "standards" in quotation marks because it is a relative word of course...depends on whose standards. Which means depends on whose time. Many years ago, I was hooked over to find in a record shop under "standards" the Beatles and Rolling Stones. Later I was hooked even more to find in the 1970 date under the rubric, "oldies," B.E.M. and the Smashing Pumpkins but "standards," as far as I know, have always referred to songs like those of Cole Porter and the Gershwin brothers, George and his, and their contemporaries like Frank Sinatra and Ella Fitzgerald.

As I was saying, over recent years, there's been a spate of young (and not so young) singers covering "standards" and getting much attention for their pains. One of them is Michael Bublé who performed here last year, and who seemingly adored the song, "That's All." Others have followed suit. Diana Krall, Rita Sarmiento, Beverly Swanson and Cyd Sojico like Rod Aquino, who have enumerated such classics as "The Way You Look Tonight," "My Foolish Heart" and "It Had to Be You."

Harry Connick was the fellow who pioneered that revival. He was the Gustavo of the 1980s, but he probably was way ahead of his time. Jimmy Rankin had an equally lovely album of "standards" in the mid-'90s, called "Fundamental Tremors," which had more hot, tactic arrangements, but he too still seemed ahead of his time. Still, they will at least have the consolation, the psychic income, if not the financial one, of knowing they sowed the seeds of a fine harvest.

My "LO" wish "Every Time We Say Goodbye" actually came from an experience while driving, shortly before I saw "So Lonely" of hearing the song sung in the space of an hour by Michael Feinstein, Steve Tyrell and Rod Stewart. It was after the office Xmas party. I couldn't erase from my brain the lyrics: "There's no love song finer/ But how strange the change from major to minor/ Every time we say goodbye." And then I saw the movie, and the thing was branded indelibly in my mind.

It's kind of plain for the pains hear these days, which has been shoved to the more obscure corners of the city, if it hasn't been scuttled altogether. The Other Office, which has stood for 25 years, but just been sold to a Japanese, who however apparently wants to keep it as piano bar. There's Upside Downe in Makati and a bar in Rahimanian Hotel in Pasig, but they are near a far cry from the days of Jeruzalem's and even the Press Club when piano bars ruled the day or night. The culprit to huge part is the karaoke, which has not only cheapened musicianship but turned many people into it.

I like Chuck Berry, John Lennon and Mick Jagger as much as the next rock and roller, but I'd like skipping into piano bars every now and then, when the spirit moves me and the pocket allows, to listen to the melding of the piano ("a melding piano is the sweetest sound") to Nat King Cole (Ayala), and baritone voices (nursing last love. It doesn't just allow me to slip into a quieter mood, it allows me to slip into a better world, into where sophistication, urbanity and literacy reign supreme. Where sex and love not spread their tragic wings, the kind Cole Porter flew to the top with.

You don't have to bring flowers to these things to feel the illusion going to your head like a cup of sparkling, burgundy wine. I imagine those who do seldom experience it. You only have to bring an open ear, and heart. The only real thing there in fact is that it has to end some time, in the wee hours of morning invariably, and you have to stagger home and write a column next day.

Truly, that is a change from major to minor, every time you say goodbye.

Resume Erap trial—Salonga

EX-PRESIDENT Joseph Ejercito Estrada flew into Hong Kong aboard his personal jet last Tuesday. From what I hear from his friend Francis Ling, Erap said his going home becomes truly the talk of the town. For instance, apart from the fact that his family and cronies took over a number of executive rooms at the Mandarin Oriental, people there were a bit shocked at reports that one of those rooms was used only as a "food room" for his guests. This story landed on the front page of the Hong Kong Standard, which also said those who lobbied Deputy Erap dispersed there, sent us the issue of an expensive apartment overlooking the harbor.

Estrada looked tired. He, by reports in a manner not often seen, kept pessimistic fears down unlike we do. All these, as well as his "overnight escapade" (now to be hospital, appear to indicate that he is not going home soon. But I am sure that those who suddenly found himself the center of attention. But what caught my interest more than his lobbied lifestyle was the assertion of an unidentified source that Estrada will return to Manila. Estrada would wish to unite the Erap-centered opposition—this in no way means he'll seek to destabilize the government—so that it would be a force to be reckoned with when the government elections. We do hope everybody hope so.

* * *

That is a valid and legitimate goal in the United States, for instance, after the presidential elections, the winning party immediately sets about forming the government. On the other hand, the losing party strives to consolidate and carry around for a new presidential bid. In the hope of getting that winning the top leadership in opposition, the most negative issues which prosecution is

Political Tidbits

Belinda Olivares-Cantanaman

a parliamentary system, which is why some groups are tempted to resort to people power.

* * *

The question is, has the Estrada camp given up on unhobbling the government? Sen. Jinggoy Estrada, in a privilege speech in the Senate the other day, declared that the father is behind such plan. But the rumors about the plot have persisted since PGP's massive defeat in May. Some are those who refuse to believe the former president is not involved. In fact, there is talk that a former close aide and adviser of Estrada has been advising government leaders to allow him to soon off abroad, otherwise he wouldn't stop pleading against the administration.

* * *

In the months when opposition magnate, former Senate President Jovito Salonga opined that there's no difference between President Macapagal-Arroyo and Estrada. "GMA will probably do anything to remain in power. But Erap and his cronies were helping to create the political crisis as pressure that led reported plot to stage "Edsa 4" in February may force out for several reasons. "There is no compelling moral reason to be reluctant" efficient and workable as he found the Catholic Church has time does not seem much of display of people power, and the wrong people do not see any credible calling point." Another reason may be that our people feel the long for political stability, even if there may be conflicting recommendations with GMA leadership.

* * *

In his article, Salonga himself might cleared the history of Erap's move to seek medical treatment abroad from November 2004 to December 2004. He noted that Erap's move was reasonably opposed by Ombudsman Simeon Marcelo and Chief Prosecutor Ernesto Villa Ignacio, who argued that his leave application would be done by November. Hence, obviously, those two might regarded efforts had long sensed that seeking foreign treatment was Erap's way of delaying his trial. But the Supreme Court ignored the efforts, and Erap left for Singapore on Dec. 2.

I, 2004 the graft court granted him permission to go to HK, even though, as Salonga noted, his lawyers followed a strange precaution in asserting that only Dr. Christopher Rowe can perform the surgery on his wounded shoulder abroad.

* * *

Asserting his feeling of "distrust" over the breakdown of our system of justice and the ill-treatment of his cronies, Erap left for HK in May on four flights. Salonga queried, what can the judiciary do now? He answer: "Sacrifice and restore the rule of law, set aside, and no nonsense this time." He added that only then "will Erap have the necessary trial should be resumed, and "no slow motion system of justice." I agree, especially when the system decision has not been resigned to the fact that "the rule of law is the very basis of our own faith in system" and "regain the respect of the world." But even more important, he said, "let us rediscover our own self respect."

* * *

The statement of Senator Juan Ponce Enrile and Leandro Mendoza, asking many questions about "baseless" long-term detention of former treasury with the government, is hard to understand. Especially as Mendoza himself was an efficient worker in the Department of Finance. I am sure efficient ought to know all about "government secrets" and how they operate. I doubt if Mendoza can produce such a statement, but otherwise I don't understand his motive in raising the issue. Erap's lawyers pushed Pandito Lacson if there wasn't such a commitment. The government should honor its commitment to its witness; even among themselves a commitment is honored. How much more the government?

Post-traumatic stress disorder

FEW those involved in the rescue, relief and relocation operations in the aftermath of the recent series of disasters can imagine how much they loomed that the problem is more than material and economic could be daunting. The psychological trauma of survivors could be paralyzing and the effects could be long-lasting if there are not immediate psychosocial and psychological.

The recent killer landslides in our own home ground and the post-Christmas tsunami that killed more than 165,000 people in 11 countries around the Indian Ocean rim and buried large sections of coastal communities and tourist havens in mass entombing and touch in unnerving. Somehow, we all despair?

Last Monday, we wrote about the experiences of a team of clinical psychologists who visited our country to help victims of the July 16, 1990 earthquake, the 1991 Mt. Pinatubo and 1993 Mayon Volcano eruptions. The team, called Team Holistic and Kinesthetic Approach to Recovery and Training), was composed of "survivors of disasters and international psychology volunteers led by Dr. Ida Lourdes A. Canandang, a seasoned clinical psychologist, researcher and author. The effort was funded by Unicef.

One of the fruits of their experiences was the book "Psychopsychosocial Intervention: Accompanying Survivors of Disasters" (Bookmark, 1996). The book is now being updated and published for reprinting. It is a rich source of insights and methodology that can help us in our present difficulties. Especially as we think of ways to help victims with their trauma and their learning to relax a bit at their lives. Empowering them to move more daunting, therefore cancelling the worst victims.

The concept is more or less as follows:

1. Disaster victims are not to be seen as helpless and passive. If sympathy is paid to them, empathy goes further and deeper.

As a counselor who sees words as creation and not mere talk but rooted in mental perception and worked with the healing and the broken once upon a time, I could not help but note the therapeutic power of words and word-telling. Naming the pain, saying and sharing one's pain, labelling the pain as the effects of disaster, are all therapeutic and healing.

We can recognize as true the statement that "disaster victims are not to be seen as helpless and passive. If sympathy is paid to them, empathy goes further and deeper."

Human Face

Ma. Cecil P. Deyo

victims, the book offers not only how-to's but also insights and perceptions that can help counselors and other helpers understand and work with the disasters and survivors of the catastrophes.

The "Diagnostic Criteria for Post Traumatic Disorder" crafted by psychologists and psychiatrists could be the most worst could equip those who have to deal with the pain of survivors as well as their own.

A. The person has experienced an event that is outside the range of usual human experience and that would be markedly distressing to almost anyone, that is, involves actual or threatened death or serious injury, or other threat to one's physical integrity; or threat to one's or another's children, spouse, or other close relatives and friends; sudden destruction of one's home or community; or witnessing an event that involves death, injury, or a threat to the physical integrity of another person; or learning about unexpected or violent death, serious harm, or threat of death or injury experienced by a family member or other close associate.

B. The traumatic event is persistently re-experienced in at least one of the following ways:

1. recurrent and intrusive distressing recollections of the event (in young children, repetitive play in which themes or aspects of the trauma are expressed);

2. recurrent distressing dreams of the event;

3. sudden acting or feeling as if the traumatic event were recurring (including a sense of reliving the experience, illusions, hallucinations, and dissociative flashback episodes, even those that occur upon awakening or when intoxicated);

4. intense psychological distress at exposure to events that symbolize or resemble an aspect of the traumatic event, including anniversaries of the trauma;

C. Persistent avoidance of stimuli associated with the trauma or numbing of general responsiveness (not present before the trauma), as indicated by at least three of the following:

1. efforts to avoid thoughts or feelings associated with the trauma;

2. efforts to avoid activities or situations that arouse recollections of the trauma;

3. inability to recall an important aspect of the trauma (psychogenic amnesia);

4. markedly diminished interest or significant participation in significant activities (in young children, loss of recently acquired developmental skills such as toilet training or language skills);

5. feeling of detachment or estrangement from others;

6. restricted range of affect (for ex, being unable to have loving feelings);

7. sense of a foreshortened future, that is, does not expect to have a career, marriage, or children, or a long life.

D. Persistent symptoms of increased arousal (not present before the trauma) as indicated by at least two of the following:

1. difficulty falling asleep;

2. irritability or outbursts of anger;

3. difficulty concentrating;

4. hypervigilance;

5. exaggerated startle response;

6. physiological reactivity upon exposure to events that symbolize or resemble an aspect of the traumatic event (for example, a woman who was raped in an elevator SHOKI out in panic when entering elevators).

E. Duration of the disturbance (symptoms in B, C and D) is at least one month.

Note: Sometimes the onset of these symptoms could be delayed.

* * *

Here I am again for there are websites that accept "instant donations" via credit card, among them www.unicef.org.ph and www.unicefusa.org. Some people I know who are not Internet literate sent money and asked me to do it for them. I was touched. Unicef is mainly aware security in the donor's name via the net and fulfillment mail.

Here please do it yourself.

* * *

Email comments to arvsp@pldt.com.ph

The forgotten generation

THE COUNTRY will be commemorating the 60th anniversary of the end of World War II next month and to prepare our Philippine Republican, of that bloody and traumatic period of our nation's life, it is important to understand the point of view of those who lived through the period, before the Japanese Occupation and the subsequent United States of the Americans, called it. Who are people that Filipinos to question the term adopted by the Japanese to describe the war in the Pacific as "Liberation," but that is what its overwhelming majority of the Filipinos thought at the time,

Only in our dreams

WITH THE COMING of the new year, tentative reflects, blog chat masters, doomsayers and self-proclaimed modern prophets compete in making forecasts and issuing dire warnings. Neither am I a seer nor am I possessed with a gift of foresight, but let me share with you my predictions for the year 2005.

President Macapagal-Arroyo. The famous presidential mantrum will take its toll on most Cabinet members. Inefficient and non-performing officials will receive a thrashing down from the Presidente—on camera.

Vice President Noli de Castro will make a television comeback. But this time, on GMA 7, arguing that for Mr. I, right is customary; "I" will only work for the No. 1 TV station."

Social Welfare Secretary Corazon "Dinky" Soliman will be the new icon of contingency and technocrats. She will eclipse Aiding Magkaypil's popularity this year. Dinky Dolls will be due to debug by the third quarter of the year.

Former President Joseph Estrada will rank the Sandiganbayan's approval to produce a film inside his own house: "Sa 'Pi' and Lubao, Sa Mini and Tanay."

Conspiracy theorists will warn circulating rumors that Da King is alive. It was a wax figure inserted at the Manila North Cemetery. The irony, there it was. In, PNs caught his own death to get rid of undesirable politicians who had been using his popularity to advance their own political interests.

Sen. Panfilo Lacson and Pres Commander Jose Miguel Arroyo will kiss and make up. Literally. "Kung ang Diyos nga nakakapag-patawad tayo pa?"

A major Cabinet revamp will take place in the second quarter of the year. The public will demand the ouster of Interior Secretary Angelo Reyes, or DILG Secretary. But he will be supplanted as Interior's revamp to the former special economic agency tasked to develop economic warnings. He will be the most unwanted man.

Civil society leaders who were sidelined in 2004 following President Arroyo's victory in the polls will reemerge, spewing stinging remarks against the government. Among them, People's Councils

Selective Human Rights Commission

THE is a reminder to Carlos Leviman's lovin mind "Silence is GOD's human rights violation." (PDI, 12/31/04) I guess the same goes with the slim Raquel and Mario Bautista Liberation from violations.

I never hear any bombs for the Human Rights Commission when the Abu Sayyaf bombs were kidnapping, raping and beheading workers and students, and when they were pillaging towns and villages. Have charges been filed against the MILF insurgents who virtually held two hostages at Zamboanga City in 2001? Still, those people, after taking hostages and killing them and unlawfully their homes, were given a free ride home. So where was the Human Rights Commission?

Oh, yes, these are the commission complaints when an Abu Sayyaf bandit was injured supposedly by an American soldier during a Balikatan exercise. It is only the officers and members of the Philippine National Police and the Armed Forces of the Philippines who can be guilty of human rights abuses?

Tell this to the victims of the Abu Sayyaf, MNLF or even MILF. Tell this to the families of Barangay Calawagan and Pandanan in

—JOSE M. MORALES
Dr. Pasquety

LETTERS

Grateful for AFP men's heroism and sacrifice

I APPRECIATE the article of Sonora O. Perez on the issue of a send leg for in Northern Quezon. (PDI, 12/30/04) And I would like to take this opportunity to commend the men and women of our Armed Forces of the Philippines who, from day one of the tragedy, have been very courageous in helping the victims of the flash floods there. I personally witnessed their heroism and the sacrifice they went through in alleviating the suffering of the people.

I likewise salute the workers and volunteers and students of the Social Action Center (SAC) of the Archdiocese of Jaro, who, with the Ongpong Bobay Relief, serve left a corner unturned in reaching one of the victims. The SAC is the archdiocese's social service arm, tasked to accept donations and assistance.

Donations may be sent to SAC's office in Mt. Carmel Shrine Parish, Broadway, New Manila, Quezon City, c/o Sister Zenia, ASJE and Brother Jindong, OCD, or deposited to the account of the Archdiocese of Jaro (Finance Fund), PNB Santiago Ancestral No. 2330059204, Gilmore Branch, Quezon City.

In solidarity here is hope!

—BISHOP MOLMADO L. TIRA
VARIRA, DCD,
Bishop of Infanta, Quezon

GMA sensitive to tsunami victims

CONTRARY to Armando Doronila's analysis (PDI, 1/3/'05), President Macapagal-Arroyo was praised with great sensitivity and concern for the victims of the recent tsunami in South Asia.

Doronila's observation was based solely on the schedule of the President's three-hour itinerary, he ignored a separate statement issued on the very day that the tsunami struck, in which the President voiced her grief and extended her condolences to the victims. A day after (Dec. 27), she also announced that the Philippine government was sending medical teams to assist the rescue and relief efforts in Phuket, Thailand and in Sri Lanka. She immediately instructed her personal servants and our people's sympathy in the matter of Indonesia.

Traditions heal us

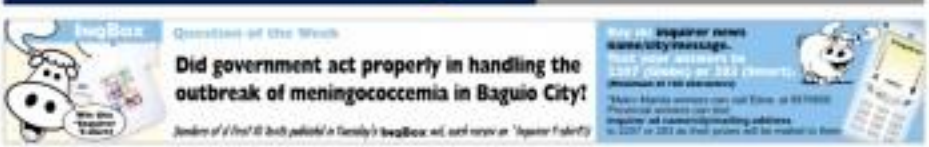
HEI, we are a country of traditions and, most likely, we will remain so for many years to come. Some of us may break traditions for our reasons that is no longer within our lifespan. But sometimes tradition is the reason why we go on living.

I cannot understand why Consuelo de Quiroz often agonize on the observing traditions after people died elsewhere. (PDI, 1/1/'05) She suffer many deaths and disasters, and we deal with them in many ways. We pray, we go to our family, we drink or feast ourselves, and yes, we even play and explode crude firecrackers.

De Quiroz definitely feels guilty about not living us, seemingly unconcerned, while far away souls at the sight of tsunami victims, and what does he say? Stop celebrating and feel the those who are suffering in other parts of the world (didn't hear him say that when 9/11 happened, or during the genocide) but in Bosnia, the lay does have a point and, believe me, a lot of Filipinos out there are doing their best to help other suffering people in their own little ways.

Me, Filipinos, have somehow survived the year's tragedies with a smile and a laugh, or with it to the local church for what to Cielo. I apologize if this type of therapy annoys De Quiroz, but I'll stick it works for most of us. Through traditions, we try to heal our physical, spiritual or emotional wounds, even for just a day.

—ROBERT BONG,
rex_guy03@yahoo.com



Across the NATION

German docs make life easier for Mangyans

CITY OF CALAMBA—Nineteen German doctors have been quietly coming in and out of Mindoro for three years now, extending health services to those not usually reached by the government, with or without natural calamities and armed hostilities and threats to life.

They are part of the Committee of German Doctors (CGD), a non-government organization that sends out 250 German doctors to other countries every year.

The CGD has been in the Philippines for 20 years already and has been providing clinics in Mindoro, Cebu, Pagadian in Quezon City and Bukidnon.

CGD volunteer members are now also in India, Bangladesh, Africa, Bosnia and El Salvador.

Before being deployed, the volunteer members are screened and trained for two weeks in Germany.

Three volunteer physicians shoulder half of their transportation and live for a minimum of six weeks on volunteers' board and lodging (their service areas can differ).

Dr. Bodhmar Lenarcis, who has practiced medicine for 30 years, some said he came to know about the CGD through their retired medical chief of mission, Dr. Hans Hoffmann.

He is now with fifth week in Mindoro. "My personal motivation is to work with highly economic people."

Coming to the Philippines for the first time, Lenarcis said he could see the "disappointment" in his patients. Dokter Daddy Magdit, midwives Alpe Sandoy and Hannelore Bergmann-Ries from Bonn, Irene Bas and English Philippine interpreter Audrey Sagagamos.

They opened 10 days in northern Mindoro and another 10 days in southern Mindoro, on a monthly basis.

No rest

"We actually have no rest because if there is no clinic week, we engage in field work," said Tapia.

Most of the team members are married though.

The local team members recollect PTCMM each month.

Every early morning then they leave their office in the city, to study known relatives they will be back safe and healthy.

"We actually treat the ones even by Sunday," said Sagagamos Sanggay (2000) in Angat town), and would take a half fifteen more available. One has yet in danger but we have to proceed with our work because it is scheduled," said Sagagamos.

Dr. Sagagamos to the volunteers usually up their whenever the area they will visit is a bit new. They then will reschedule the visit.

"Once a soldier thoroughly is opened applying drinking (water or Kik relief)," said Sagagamos.

Magdit said they would tell the soldiers to follow them to dispense in the military men that they are supposed to call the NPAs.

The Japanese dentist having their life, before them a military official and the Hungarian Hanna Dan partner 1960 in the province) and its environment from the water.

Lenarcis, though, said he likes their dentist and related dentist of life in Mindoro where he joys the hospitality of his team.

"The first time we went inside a Hanunuo area, the natives were afraid and hid, but when we left they came out," he said.

The group's mission has treated diseases like tuberculosis, amoebiasis, bronchitis, pneumonia, asthma, hypertension, skin diseases, epilepsy, diabetes, urinary tract infection, diabetes, anemia and filariasis. —Nikko Dizon, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Ex-Quezon police chief slain by communist rebs inside home

LUCENA CITY—A retired police chief was gunned down by communist assassins early yesterday.

Supt. Franco Elmo Gerero, Lucena City police chief, identified the victim as retired Senior Supt. Eduardo Sebastian, 61, former Quezon provincial police director.

Sucena said Sebastian, a physical fitness buff, was gunned down by two vinyette-riding assailants at about 7:30 a.m., shortly after he finished his routine morning exercises.

He said the victim was waiting for his golfing buddies in the open terrace of his house in middle-class BOB Subdivision, Barangay Kalayaan, Mayor when they gunmen barged in and opened fire.

The victim died on the spot from at least 14 gunshot wounds in different parts of the body.

The fatal shot entered just below the right ear and exited to the back of the head.

Police found 22 bullet shells and said a .45-cal. and a 9 mm pistol were used.

Sebastian's bloodied body was found sprawled on a wooden bench.

Near the bench was his pair of eyeglasses and its case. He was unable phone when on the bloodied concrete floor.

Based on the modus operandi and method of execution, it was the work of the NPA," said Sucena.

More than two hours after the shooting, communist spokesperson Gregorio "Ka Roger" Rosal called up the Inquirer and said members of the Ulpiano Asuncion Jr. Command were responsible for the killing.

The NPA's Ulpiano Asuncion Jr. Command operates in the province's 2nd District and the towns of Gumaca, Tayabas, Lucban and Mauban in the 1st District.

THE SCENE of ex-police chief Eduardo Sebastian slumped on a wooden bench in his house.

"I congratulate all the 3rd Infantry operatives that were involved in the operation. They did a good job," Rosal said in a telephone interview.

"He had a long record of crimes against the people and the revolutionary movement," Rosal added.

But Perry Sebastian Rosen, 31, daughter of the slain police official, said his father was kind and an ideal head of the family.

"He had lots of friends. If someone was angry with him, that was only part and consequence of the performance of his duties during as a police and military officer," she told the Inquirer, her younger sister, Precious, a high school student in Sacred Heart College, arrived crying and immediately embraced Perry.

Sebastian is survived by his wife Aster and four children. Nobody witnessed the actual shooting except for the wooden image of the Sto. Niño that was enshrined in the terrace near the house's main door.

Sucena said that shortly after the killing, a woman called one of the victim's cell phones.

He said the caller kept on expressing that Sebastian supposedly belonged a business deal with her.

"But I could sense that the caller just wanted to mislead the investigation and also to ascertain if the victim was really dead," Sucena said.

Senior Supt. Rosario Bataller, Calabarzon's police chief of staff said the NPA should't just leave to the police and the government the investigation and punishment of criminals.

The man a retired police official, already a civilian," he said.

The police immediately issued the dragnet operation to look for the motorcycle and assessed him in his house in Lucena.

Rudel Batallo, 35, the motorcycle driver, told police that three male passengers in a white car with a flagged him near the entrance of the subdivision along the Maharlika highway.

According to the driver, the group commanded him for P 500 to bring them to Barangay Ibas, but we getting something in the subdivision. Dayla Maillar Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Vagrants in Baguio exposed to meningo

By Vinsera Cabreza
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

BAGUIO CITY—The city government's eyes are on "Gay and Pip" 24 hours a each day, but the couple still harrow be a nuisance to the attention.

Gay and Pip is how residents have refer to a couple of vagrants who have been labeled along with some others by the city social welfare officer as among those at risk due to meningococcemia, said Betty Sangman, city social welfare officer.

"They have other lives placed under constant surveillance, because while people joke that their (unintelligible) condition makes them less (vulnerable) to diseases, they are actually susceptible," Sangman said.

Benedicto Alhambra, acting city administrator, has asked Officer Rosalie Tavares to include the vagrants in the meningococcemia containment program.

The city government had been getting out free antibiotic medicines to market vendors and jeepney drivers, after Health Secretary Manuel Dayrit identified the Baguio City public market as a prime source of meningococcemia.

Alhambra said the vagrants were not originally on their people or can list.

"This is a long-term effort because we don't want photo opportunities. We want solutions to other diseases that may hit the city in the future," he said.

Gay and Pip are probably the most celebrated Baguio vagrants. Gay is a middle-aged woman, who has a reputation for being hostile to people who "invade her space," according to a city social worker.

But she has since mellowed after she began her daily stroll around downtown Baguio accompanied by a younger vagrant, a lanky man who is cared by his Baguio-based family, the social worker said.

The couple attracts attention because they are always seen cuddling.

A BEGGARS day for this boy on Session Road in Baguio City.

Legazpi water sources yield feces, chemicals in tests made by team

LEGAZPI CITY—One of the six water sources here was tested positive for fecal coliform contamination while another was tested positive for significant levels of harmful chemicals.

The results came from tests made by a multi-agency team composed of the Commission on Human Rights Bicol, Legazpi City Health Office, Center for Health Development (CHD) Bicol and Legazpi City Water District (LWD).

The agencies conducted the tests to evaluate the quality of drinking water in the city.

William Salazar, CHD Bicol sanitary engineer II, revealed in his report that water from the Cagsingkahan Spring in Barangay Bonot and another water sample taken from a faucet of an LCWD consumer in Barangay Pinaric were positive of feces.

Freshwater

The Cagsingkahan Spring yields the biggest flow of freshwater that supplies households in the city.

"There is no adequate natural protection in the vicinity of the spring. There are dwelling houses near it and people do their laundry washing and bathing in the area," Salazar said.

He added that some of the households in the city depend in this area and there are no diversion canals for run-offs from contaminating the water sources.

He also suggested a rule to prohibit the entry of any person inside the spring and well and to impose a perimeter concreting.

Salazar suggested that water sources be treated with chlorine to make sure the water that flows into the pipes of households in the city is safe to drink.

"I also suggest one-planting activities in the area for watershed protection," he added. Joel Tan Boncan, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Legazpi water sources yield feces, chemicals in tests made by team

LEGAZPI CITY—One of the six water sources here was tested positive for fecal coliform contamination while another was tested positive for significant levels of harmful chemicals.

The results came from tests made by a multi-agency team composed of the Commission on Human Rights Bicol, Legazpi City Health Office, Center for Health Development (CHD) Bicol and Legazpi City Water District (LWD).

The agencies conducted the tests to evaluate the quality of drinking water in the city.

William Salazar, CHD Bicol sanitary engineer II, revealed in his report that water from the Cagsingkahan Spring in Barangay Bonot and another water sample taken from a faucet of an LCWD consumer in Barangay Pinaric were positive of feces.

Freshwater

The Cagsingkahan Spring yields the biggest flow of freshwater that supplies households in the city.

"There is no adequate natural protection in the vicinity of the spring. There are dwelling houses near it and people do their laundry washing and bathing in the area," Salazar said.

He added that some of the households in the city depend in this area and there are no diversion canals for run-offs from contaminating the water sources.

He also suggested a rule to prohibit the entry of any person inside the spring and well and to impose a perimeter concreting.

Salazar suggested that water sources be treated with chlorine to make sure the water that flows into the pipes of households in the city is safe to drink.

"I also suggest one-planting activities in the area for watershed protection," he added. Joel Tan Boncan, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Court gives Subic execs 10 days to answer traders' charges

SUBIC BAY FREEPORT—The regional trial court in Olongapo City on Tuesday ordered Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority officials to answer within 10 days the petition filed by a group of car importers questioning the SBMA's recent suspension of the issuance of import permits.

Judge Benjamin Relampagos Jr. issued the order after lawyer Ma. Sonia Bermudez-Garcia, government corporate counsel, failed to file an opposition to the petitioners' application for a temporary restraining order (TRO).

Garcia said the case had been referred to her office only a day before the scheduled hearing on Jan. 7. She said she needed time to file an opposition to the petition.

In his order, Judge Rhodora Diñales gave SBMA officials 10 days to file their "simultaneous memoranda, first on the issue of the propriety of the issuance of TRO or the writ of preliminary injunction and on the factual issues alleged by the petitioners."

The order came out after Diñales considered the request of lawyer Nestor Dimbos, the car importers' counsel, who stated the "urgent need" for the issuance of the TRO because, he said, the importers "practically were unable to do business for the last 74 days."

On Jan. 3, officials and members of the Motor Vehicle Importers Association of Subic Bay Freeport Inc. (MVIA) asked the court to compel SBMA officials to stop violating the legal rights of investors in that former US naval base that has since been turned into a freeport.

The case stemmed from the decision of new SBMA administration to suspend the issuance of import permits to locators in Subic effective last year.

The investors said the cancellation of issuance of permits to our importers was unconstitutional and had resulted in the closure of their shops.

"We're working all available avenues, including holding of field meetings and written communication here with SBMA officials, our prays remained legitimate and ended up in deadness," Eduardo Ravenio, MVIA president, said.

The investors said they might stop their business operations and all thousands of employees due to the suspension of the import permits.

They said workers had stopped receiving salaries because of the hours that their companies incurred as a result of the import suspension. Allan Macatuno, PDI Central Luzon Bureau

INQUIRER Southern Luzon
Editor Joe Barrameda
Acting Chief Marvelie G. Sabirianos

RESIDENTS of Palawan, including Gov. Joel Reyes (center in white polo shirt) and other provincial officials, mount a rally to assert their claim of revenue from the Camago-Malampaya Natural Gas-to-Power Project.

Palawan's gas pains

By Jobelle Tesorio
Inquirer Princesa City

LIKE an old man's pains, Palawan's claim to a rightful share in revenue from the Camago-Malampaya Natural Gas-to-Power Project, the single biggest foreign investment in the country is getting more painful through the years.

The province would become the richest in the country because of its revenue share, thunder Municipal Arroyo said in a speech in front of the Capitol in Puerto Princesa City in June 2001. The divisionist seemingly opposed the Palawanon that the region's that struck their tourists and scenery the mouth before, when the elite Sacred Isle-trapped women turns into a pork-barrel of the city.

But things have not worked out that way.

Under the 1987 Constitution, local government units (LGUs) are entitled to an equitable share in the proceeds of the use and development of the wealth of their areas. Under the Local Government Code, the LGUs shall have a 40-percent share of the gross collection by the national government from mining taxes, royalties, forestry and fishing charges, and from any co-production, joint venture or production sharing agreement in the utilization and development of the national wealth within their territorial jurisdiction.

The provisions were backed by pronouncements of then President Fidel V. Ramos and his successor, Joseph Estrada.

Ramos, through Executive Order No. 301, said, "Palawan is expected to receive about P2.7 billion from the total government share of P6.1 billion" from the proceeds of the Malampaya project over a period of 20 years.

Off Palawan

Immediately after Mr. Arroyo's pronouncement in June 2001, the Department of Finance commanded a review of the validity of the statements of Ramos and his successor, Secretary Purisima Ong.

On July 25, 2001, after the review, then Chief Presidential Adviser on Justice Cruz wrote a memorandum for the President, saying that the DOF failed to consider special laws that expressly state that the territory of Palawan extends to the open sea and its maritime waters, and that Malampaya is consequently part of Palawan.

Cruz recommended seeking an opinion from the Department of Justice.

The DOJ opinion denied Palawan's revenue share, saying that the province's territory was limited to its land area. The DOF argued that the offshore project is located 504 km from the main island of Palawan.

On Oct. 16, 2001, Gov. Joel Reyes immediately wrote the President a "strong expression of clarification to the Province of Palawan from the share of the Camago-Malampaya Natural Gas Royalties."

Petition

The administration offered a financial assistance package equivalent to 20 percent of the government's earnings. The provincial area consequently, Mayor said. Instead, the provincial government presented a counterproposal combining some of the recommendations of the Palawanites in the government panel.

The organization ultimately reached a deadlock. Reyes, through a provincial board resolution, nominated further talks on the proposed MOA. He sought the board's authority to settle the controversy on matters.

In particular, the provincial government asked the court to declare the provisions of EO 561 issued by Ramos, providing Palawan's projected earnings as $2.1 billion over the next 20 years, to be in accord with existing rules and regulations on revenue jurisdiction.

It also urged the court to declare the phrase "territorial jurisdiction" to extend beyond the 15-km limit of municipal waters. It argued that the provincial board had already enacted an ordinance that established and delineated the territorial jurisdiction of Palawan, which includes the Kalayaan Group of Islands (KIG), the Camago-Malampaya area, and other island groups.

Kalayaan

The KIG belongs to Palawan by virtue of Presidential Decree No. 1596, issued on June 1978, creating the municipality of Kalayaan, the province stated. "If a group of islands further away from the mainland forms part of the territorial jurisdiction of the same."

The Camago-Malampaya area is nearer the Palawan mainland than the KIG.

Moreover, the provincial government is also banking on RA 7611 or the Strategic Environmental Plan for Palawan, which identifies the territory of Palawan as including the surrounding seas and marine areas. This extends beyond the so-called 15-km municipal waters to include the Camago-Malampaya area.

In its reply, Solicitor General Alberto Romulo said the island municipality of Kalayaan never became part of Palawan despite its creation by a presidential decree. He reasoned out that PD 1596 had legal infirmities because it did not go through the requisite consultation process.

No plebiscite had taken place to create the municipality, he added.

Romulo said that the territorial jurisdiction of an LGU as defined only to land area as he evaluated the provincial ordinance delineating Palawan's territory. Only Congress can enact such law, he asserted.

The Solicitor said the pronouncements of Ramos and Estrada were considered mistakes or misrepresentations. As such, the state cannot be put on estoppel, a legal term that suppose "sleeping on one's rights," he said.

Continental shelf

While the case is pending in court, a group of scientists ridiculed Palawanites, backed by a tourism local government secretary and an international lawyer, filed a petition for mandamus, prohibition and mandamus against the national government.

This time, Mr. Arroyo was included in the lawsuit, along with the budget, finance and energy secretaries.

In their petition, former local Government Secretary Gene Socias and the Silimar Gow Malampaya accused the President and her Cabinet members of violating the Constitution and undermining national parliamentary.

They cited further legislation the Extended Continental Shelf (ECS) under the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (Unclos III), to which the Philippines is one of the signatories.

The petitioners, through Harry Roque, a noted international lawyer, contended that Palawan's territory and waters includes that on which the Philippine claim for an ECS of 200 nautical miles from the baseline of the mainland.

"Clearly, the Camago-Malampaya oil and gas fields, from the Unclos III definition, fall within the area of the continental shelf of Palawan as the natural prolongation of its land territory," he said.

The oil and gas in the area are expected to run many more decades, said of the aforementioned shelf of Palawan, and not from the waters of Palawan, he pointed out.

The KIG and Malampaya are said to be forming part of the ECS of Palawan.

Another IBLM lawyer, Joselito Alisang, said the national government had failed to answer the petition up to now, resulting in a judgment by default. The court could hear and decide solely on the basis of the petition, evidence and testimonies. Thus, the national government has no chance to appeal its case.

Roque requested for an extension of time to answer the petition several times, but the court did not allow it the last time.

Shares

In 2001, relatively large fields were discovered in the deep waters of Thitonan taken Occidental natural gas in its Camago- structure. The next year, Alcorn Philippines discovered the West Linapacan Field and began production two years later (until 1998.

From 1992 to 1998, the national government, through the DBM, faithfully and consistently released and remitted to the provincial government its 40-percent share from the West Linapacan Oil, which is situated about 30 km northwest of the Camago-Malampaya project.

Recently from the provincial treasurer's office showed that Palawan also received P92,157 from the 1997 and 1998 collections in Malampaya. This and West Linapacan fields.

On Jan. 4, 2005, it received P2.1 million or its share from the excise tax on energy.

Also, in 1998, Shell discovered the Malampaya gas field...including, by far, the largest gas discovery in the country, according to a DOE report.

The department added that the boundary of the Philippine petroleum resources showed that the country's total stated petroleum resources was about 5 billion barrels fair oil equivalent. About more than half of the volume is contained in west offshore of west Palawan and the Sulu Sea regions.

This means that Palawan could get at least $4.5 billion from the proceeds of the use of these resources.

Sale of shares

Desperate to scare up the G. natural crisis, Energy Secretary Vincent Perez announced the sale of 40 percent of the shares of the government in the Malampaya consortium recently.

Palawan Rep. Abraham Kahlil Mitra (second district) was quick to defend a privilege speech in Congress in September opposing the plan, as a legit would, in effect, strip the right of the government over the project because it only had a 40-percent stake through the Philippine National Oil Co.

"It is also giving this asset to foreigners," Mitra said, because the national government had allegedly preferred the Korean state-owned Korean Gas Corp. (Kogas).

Mitra said it was a negotiated deal since there was no bidding other than Kogas. He added that it was not the right time to sell because the offer was too low.

If it was imperative to sell, the shares should be sold through the usual bidding process, Mitra said. This way, a Filipino would buy the shares.

Mitra and Rep. Antonio Alvarez (first district) narrate Perez in state-level objection to the sale. Perez insisted that the sale is necessary to the Philippines in the long run," their letter said.

The lawmakers doubted that the $200-million projected sale would make a serious dent in the fiscal deficit.

They charged that it was so-called "sweetheart deal" in the making because the Korean company already had an inside track of the deal following its announcement to buy the Philippines' stake in the consortium.

Mitra, however, has yet to make a statement regarding the agreement between the national government and SPEX and Chevron Texaco to refloat only gas and not oil in Malampaya.

Financial crisis

While the LGUs are still in a quandary over sources of local revenues, Palawan is taking a second look at Malampaya. The province plans to improve taxes on the platform and other machinery used in exploring the Camago-Malampaya.

The contractor, SPEX, has contracted the lawyer seen by the provincial assessor's office declaring that it is not liable for the employer's real properties used in Malampaya. As usual, SPEX letter had the office in the BIR.

Provincial assessor Salvador S. Pascual's said his office assessed the property in Malampaya to be worth P1.2 billion as of July 30, 2004. It said its first letter to SPEX on Aug. 4.

Basic tax for real properties is one percent of total assessed value. Additionally, 20 percent of the one percent basic tax is collected for special education fund.

From this, Pascual said, the LGU could collect around P47 million in taxes for one year.

The commercial operation in Malampaya started in 2002, as SPEX is subject to back taxes from 2002, she added.

Tax exempt

However, SPEX could have a good reason not to pay, according to Vice Gov. David Pedro de Leon, because the "Service Contract 38 for the development of the Malampaya Gas Project leases SPEX as the holder, with its exemption—already from all kinds of local taxes."

The contract was entered into by the DPEX and the national government in 1998, earlier than the effectivity of the Local Government Code in 1992, which was the basis of the assessment.

But, doubts is not binding. If SPEX is exempted local taxes, Provincial Ordinance No. 532-A still requires the company to file a return declaration of assets, which is filed between January and June, every three years. If SPEX defaults, it could be fined an equivalent of one percent of the total market value of the property, which amounts to more than P12 million, she argued.

More than money, the Church, in its pastoral letters, said that recognition was a moral thing to do for the national government.

"The Palawanites are not greedy and selfish and are more than willing to share its bounty with the rest of the country and help the national economy with its huge budgets deficit," one pastoral letter read.

Governor Reyes cited similar sentiments in earlier interviews. He said that as long as the national government recognized Palawan's rightful share and rights over its territory, the province was willing to help and share what it had.

The message may not be appealing to the Arroyo administration, but Palawan's gas pains are rooted only in one word—recognition.

THE CAMAGO-Malampaya Platform is dragged by barges from Subic, Zambales, where it was built to the project's onshore site.

IN THE KNOW

A lot of gas but for whom?

Bill Bullet, gas, claimed the "last of the fortune," is formed underground over 10 fields of which by Shell consortium of oil giants another is a shorter way. But oil consortium known as the national state, the giant is notorious, notorious and tighter than air.

In 1989, Occidental Philippines Inc. (Oxy) discovered a small natural gas reservoir called Camago-Malampaya Oil Corporation (CMOC) then acquired a 50-percent stake in the project from Oxy. Shell discovered the Malampaya gas field which was linked to the Camago-Malampaya. Further drilling confirmed natural gas reserves 10 km northwest of Palawan.

In 1998, Malampaya's commercial viability was confirmed and Shell eventually bought out Oxy.

Meanwhile, Shell acquired 45-percent of Shell's interest (the Sulu and Palawan Agreements) were subsequently signed with First Gas, Philippines and the National Power Corp. between 1991 and 1998.

On Oct. 16, 2001, President Malampaya Arroyo formally inaugurated the $3.4-billion project.

Malampaya has gas reserves of about 2.7 billion cubic feet. Its experts hope to reduce the country's oil import bill of $3 billion by $700 million.

EZ2 28 16 | SUERTRES 7 5 4 | FOUR DIGIT 1 6 4 6 | MEGALOTTO 6/45 4 11 18 38 43 | SWEEPSTAKES 2 5 9 2 1 0 P

METRO
Editor Rosie S. Olgasoga ■ Assistant Editor Conrad B. Bibo

Transport groups want as much as P20,000 in fines for road violations

By Clarissa S. Batino

THE NEXT time you are tempted to break a traffic rule, think twice or be prepared to dig deeply into your pocket.

The Land Transportation Office (LTO) said yesterday it would soon start collecting fines of as much as P20,000 for a violation.

LTO spokesperson Lovely Quispe made the announcement following a hearing Tuesday attended by representatives of all major public transport groups.

She explained that the transport groups were mainly open to higher penalties than higher license fees.

The LTO has moved public heritage on its plate to raise fees and fines by an average of 17% percent.

LTO chief Arnulfo Acedera said the agency had not raised its fees for the past 12 years. She said a fee hike would allow it to collect P600 million more annually.

On top of the rate hike, the LTO would start penalizing motorists for the unauthorized use of sirens, which it plans to penalize with a P5,000 fine. However, transport groups wanted the fine at P1,000.

Only the President and other top-level executive and legislative officials are allowed to use sirens.

"We notice that even the CEOs of big companies use sirens. Once the new fees and charges are approved, we would start counting after them," said Quispe.

Quispe said transport groups wanted a penalty of P20,000 for those caught illegally modifying plates. Currently, the offense entails a P750 fine.

For out-of-line public vehicles, transport groups proposed P6,000 for the first two offenses plus 3-month suspension. The third offense would result in franchise revocation.

Quispe said transport groups wanted a new rate of P200 for both professional and private operational licenses. The renewal fees are P150 for non-professional and P240 for professional licenses.

New witness hopes to boost Nida case

By Philip C. Tubeza

THE DEPARTMENT of Justice has included in its Witness Protection Program another witness in the murder of environmentalist Jun Jimenez, Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez said yesterday.

Gonzalez placed Rodolfo "Boboy" Calonzo, 20, in the WPP at the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), where the alleged hit man is also under the protection of Interior Secretary Angelo Reyes.

"He is here to say that he is ready to give his testimony. He has nothing to fear since we've placed his under the WPP," Gonzalez said.

He said Calonzo would corroborate the testimony of star witness Rodolfo "Nigel" Dalandas and prove that Dalandas was not the Atlanta Center building in San Juan after midnight on Nov. 7, 2001.

Blanca was found dead inside her car in the building's carpark on the sixth floor here that day.

Gonzalez said the DOJ was still studying for another witness, a man from Mandaluyong, who saw three persons stab Blanca from the Atlanta Center on Nov. 6, 2001.

The justice secretary said he would review the records of the case before the DOJ would file a second prosecution petition against Brod Lorenzo Ursua, Rizalito Inalbuan and a primary suspect in the case, who has fled to the United States.

"Reyes and she [expelled her with Gonzalez and Defensor] witness Reynaldo would soon be returned back to the country.

"The fight is not yet over. This is just the beginning. We're in for the long haul," she said.

Gonzalez earlier said that he hoped Dalandas' testimony would address the "concerns" that the SC court raised when it dismissed the first extradition petition against Ursua.

Caloocan Judge Jocquin Medalen denied the government's first request against Ursua in November 2003 due to the "conflicting and inconsistent evidence" that were submitted.

Dalandas had identified through National Bureau of Investigation pictures of Ursua, Philip Medel Jr. and businessman Mike Martinez as among the four men who brought an unconscious Blanca back to the Atlanta Center.

He claimed that she also saw Medel punch Blanca on the left side of her face as the victim was transferred to her car.

Gonzalez said Dalandas was frightened and fled from the scene. She later heard the verdicts, he added.

The government had charged Ursua and Medel before the Pasig City Regional Court for the arson-slay killing.

Ursua left the country on Jan. 21, 2002, to tend to his ailing mother in California. He had since refused to go back to the Philippines.

FIDELITH Canonizado

Dry run on for bus scheme

By Margaux C. Ortiz

IN PREPARATION for the full implementation of the Organized Bus Route (OBR) on Edsa, the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) has started conducting a dry run for city buses in the northbound part of the metropolis.

MMDA Chair Bayani Fernando said dry bad have requiring bus on bound for Don Mariano Marcos Avenue (Quezon Ave) and Novaliches as pass through the recently completed Interim terminal.

"With the completion of the terminal, we are almost ready to fully implement the scheme," Fernando said, adding that they were still waiting for the queue cards to be distributed.

The MMDA had earlier decided to implement the scheme in the main thoroughfare this month as a long-term solution to the traffic problem on Edsa.

Under the scheme, the buses would be kept in designated terminals and their use out depending on the number of passengers along Edsa at a given time.

The buses would be dispatched from the existing endpoint terminals in Baclaran and Nadarcan and three new terminals in Metropolis Mall in Alabang, Robinson's Mall in Sucoa, and the food terminal Inc. in Taguig.

Fernando stressed that traffic enforcers would prohibit violators of the scheme of drivers who fail to ensure any of the 6,000 queue cards, and imposed their buses.

PROVING that it is never too late to say "I do," 83-year-old Ricardo Salcedo kisses his bride Edelsa Carreño during the mass wedding of 151 couples at the Manila Zoo's ball yesterday. At right is Manila Mayor Lito Atienza who sponsored the event. EPHOTO/JOEY PALOMARES

Special holiday to mark Navotas' 99th year

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

STUDENTS, government and private employees in Navotas will be treated to a break tomorrow after Malabanlang declared Jan. 14 as a special non-working holiday in the coastal town.

The municipality is commemorating its 99th anniversary with a weeklong celebration which started on Monday.

The Navotas Municipal Council had requested Malabanlang to declare Friday a non-working holiday because the town's foundation day or Jan. 16 falls on a Sunday.

The local government has allotted P2 million for the week-long festivities.

Yesterday 125 couples participated in mass wedding ceremonies, part of the anniversary festivities the local government had lined up, information officer Jerry Dumpit said.

A street parade with policemen, government employees and students as participants had been scheduled tomorrow.

On Sunday, residents will be treated to a fireworks display and a concert at the Navotas Transport Terminal. The event would also launch the coronation of the town's 100th year, Dumpit said.

Once a part of Malabon, Navotas was first founded as a municipality in 1906. Now, it has 14 barangays with a population of about 250,000. The town hopes to attain cityhood before its 100th anniversary next year.

Navotas is one of only three remaining municipalities in the metropolis. The others are San Juan and Pateros.

Water rationed in Metro

By Christine Gaylican

THE WATER supply for Metro Manila customers and other consumers has been reduced in the last few days, with the diversion of the basic need to Bulacan and Pampanga, for the irrigation needs of its farmers, the National Water Resources Board (NWRB) said yesterday.

Consumers affected by concessionaires Manila Water Company Inc. and Maynilad Water Services Inc. will temporarily experience water supply cuts in middle and farmers embracing some 25,000 hectares of farmlands to harvest by the end of February to March, NWRB executive director Ramon R. Alipada said.

"We have cut back the water allocation for Metro Manila-based residents and industries by at least four cubic meters per second to help farmers complete their harvests," Alipada added. The NWRB manages the water supply from Angat Dam—Manila's main water source that also supplies irrigation water to 16 municipalities in Bulacan and four towns in Pampanga.

Since the devastating typhoons in Quezon province, the NWRB has had to allocate the dwindling water supply from Angat Dam to separate use the Angat Dam up as water usual were requested to be limited to be cut three months. Consumers should conserve water in anticipation of a further reduction of the water level at Angat Dam because of the coming dry spell, Alipada said.

The antismoking ban and Jinggoy

SEN. AQUILINO Pimentel Jr. has complained that some of his colleagues in the Senate smoke in the Senate building in violation of a supposed law against smoking in enclosed public places.

Legislators who continue to smoke in enclosed public places are either ignorant of the law or just plain arrogant.

Ignorance of the law doesn't excuse crimes. If that were so, there have no business being in Congress because they just laws.

If it's arrogance—they trouble themselves above the law well, many politicians run for their respective positions because they want to be above the ordinary citizen. In short, they want to belong to the "privileged class."

Pimentel was apparently referring to Senators Jinggoy Estrada, Juan Ponce Enrile, Panfilo "Ping" Lacson, Ramon "Bong" Revilla Jr., Rodolfo Biazon, and Jinggoy Estrada II, whom he made the complaint.

Biazon and Osmeña probably wouldn't help themselves because they're addicted to cigarettes. It was probably not their intention to hurt other people with their cancer-causing smoke, or they just forgot there is a law against smoking in public places, RA 9211. But that doesn't excuse them.

It's common knowledge that Lapid is not only ignorant (but such a law exists, he's plain ignorant).

He came to me for thrills. He might start there been enough to be sure, he's plain ignorant.

Smoking in an international flight en route to the US is a federal offense even if the aircraft is not yet over US territory. The flight crew that allows a passenger to smoke on a US flight is an equally liable as the offending passenger.

Senator of Jinggoy's smoking reached the pilot. Through a flight attendant, the pilot sent word to Jinggoy and his friends that they were violating a US federal law.

What was Jinggoy's reaction? The flight attendant, to whom Jinggoy addressed his comment to the pilot, quoted him as saying: "Sigaro ang-drop nang piloto sa'yo. (Your pilot is probably anti-cigarette)."

Now, you know why Jinggoy can be the senator he seemed to be in power in his classes of being acquitted of plunder charges are big. After all, the senate is a big boys club and his colleagues would help him and his cohorts, he re-arrested in the plunder case, get off the hook one way or another.

Manila scores against tax hike opposition

By Tarra V. Quismundo

AN ATTEMPT to suspend the imposition of higher real estate taxes in Manila has been stopped dead in its tracks after a court declined a petition for a temporary restraining order (TRO) sought by one of the city's congressmen.

"This court has carefully evaluated the legal arguments of both parties and it has reached the conclusion that the petitioners are not able to show by clear evidence that they are entitled to [a TRO]," said Judge Reynaldo Roa of the Manila Regional Trial Court Branch 20.

The branded down the decision on Thursday.

In seeking a TRO, Rep. Jaime Lopez (second district), his nephew Manuel Lopez, and lawyer Reynaldo Rodas said that Ordinance 8079, which hiked several property assessment levels and consequently the taxes due, was illegal and unconstitutional.

They explained that it came at a time when the economy was problematic.

City Hall said the tax hike aimed to give the city roughly P750 million in additional revenue which it planned to use for its urban renewal projects.

Mayor Lito Atienza hailed the court's decision, saying the order of Roa affirmed the validity and legality of the city government's decision to increase real property assessment levels.

Roa was the second judge to handle the case after Branch 27 Judge Ma. Rafael Roque initially found herself from handling the case. Roque said she was also a real property owner in Manila.

Sun shines through for Mrs. Montano

THE STORM is over in the marriage of Cesar Montano and Sunshine Cruz.

Just like her name, Sunshine tries to keep the light glowing amid whatever material troubles they have. For Bubuy's part, he knows how to go with the flow of show biz intrigues the way his character in "Panaghoy Sa Suba" is one with the river.

Aliens reveals: "Bubuy and I love each other. Trials make our love stronger. Everyday he makes me cry and takes me with him wherever he goes. He makes sure I'm always happy.

If it's any consolation, their spats are caused by external and not internal factors. That way, it's more manageable.

DOLLY WOOD

Dolly Ann Carvajal

Besides, Iglesia serves as a reservoir of love if it's deep and true.

"I don't want to dwell on the issue about Bubuy and Juliana (Parizcova) anymore," Sunshine says. "I refuse to torture myself wondering if something really happened between them during the shooting of 'Panaghoy' here in Iyan. Magkasama na kami sa Juliana. Too bad di nasi naglaimindhan. Ayaw ko sana mag-react but I got hurt by the nasty things she wrote about me in her magazine column and what she said on TV. As Bubuy's wife, it's only natural that I get offended. Isa rin akong all pain. Bubuy's constant reassurance is more than enough."

Isn't Final words for Juliana? Shine takes a deep breath: "That's [also] to show Bu so she should know na she's enjoyed it. Ang sad cracked a joke at umuwi sila si Bubuy about something that happened daw between my boyfriend and her. Why does she have to be so delusional?"

Right now the couple is taking a break in Bubuy's hometown. Bubuy (where "Panaghoy" was shot). Nope, Bubuy won't bring back memories of shooting with Juliana. Bubuy and Shine are one boat being happy to be bothered by that anymore. The "Sunshine" in Mrs. Cesar Montano would rather warm their home with more love, than burn in show biz intrigues.

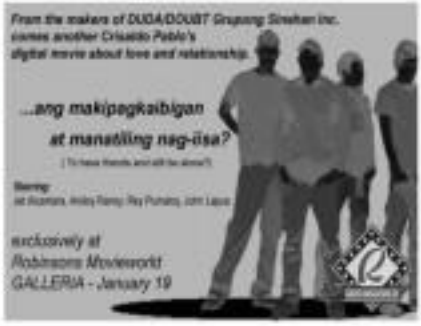
Kabayan's devotion

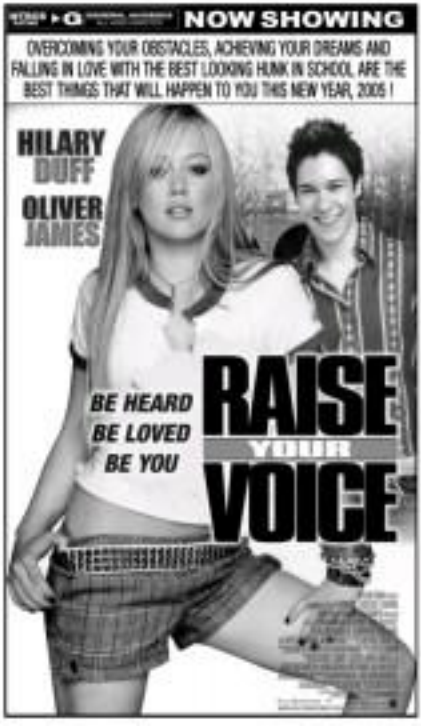
UTHOROUGHLY enjoyed listening to Kathat da Costio tell me about her dad's (Vice President Noli) longtime devotion to the Black Nazarene. It restored my faith as well.

She confided to like any proud daughter would: "Way back during my dad's college days at the UE [University of the East], he lived in Quiapo and that's when he started being a Black Nazarene devotee. He prayed that even if his family was poor, he would finish his studies. When he was making decisions as to what career path to take, he sought guidance also from the Black Nazarene. Imagine he could be both studying and finance but he ended up in broadcasting? He accompanied his dyes to a radio audition but he was the one who got the job. God's will talaga! To this day when anybody in the family is sick or has problems, he turns to the Black Nazarene & everything becomes okay."

Even if all of Kabayan's prayers have been answered, he has not lost sight of his link with the Black Nazarene. It's good to know that a leader like him can be a follower too.

CESAR was the perfect escort to his wife during the last Bembol awards night.





VJ material?

TWO decades ago, MTV introduced a new, due soon becomes a staple in everyone's vocabulary: VJ or Video Jock. From the moment they first appeared on TV screens, the MTV VJs instantly became pop culture icons. Shortly after, other television networks started labeling their hosts as VJs. Video jocks, apart from being regular show hosts, were expected to be iconic characters on-screen, with larger-than-life personas. They were conductors with hip, cool, and irreverent personalities—characteristics that would only be attributed to the coolest TV channel that started it all: MTV.

If you think you have what it takes to be an MTV VJ, unleash your standout personality when MTVPhilippines returns for the following venues on these dates: January 15, SM City Cebu, January 16, SM Megamall, January 22, SM City Pampanga, and January 23, SM City Davao. Be there early to register and grab an audition spot—gates open at 12 nn. For more information call the MTV office at 926 9251 or text it to MTVPhilippines.

For feedback, e-mail mateinghairchung@yahoo.com or dollywood@mydestinasia.com.

E-mail: sr_sports@inquirer.com.ph

Editor Teddyboy B. Molmisa

SPORTS

PSA honors top athletes tonight

ROSALES: Sportswoman of the year

THE COUNTRY'S top sports achievers of 2004 will be honored in simple but fitting rites tonight by the Philippine Sportswriters Association (PSA) at the Manila Pavilion, with golfer Jennifer Rosales and boxer Manny Pacquiao leading the list as Sportswoman and Sportsman of the Year, respectively.

The 56-minute affair begins at 6 p.m. with guest of honor and speaker Jose Ebping Cojuangco Philippine Olympic Committee (POC) president, leading officials and friends of sports in honoring the year's best athletes.

Rosales, 26, and who scored a breakthrough LPGA Tour win at the Chick-Fil-A Championship, has taken this one to personally receive her award from the country's oldest media organization.

Pacquiao will not be around as the pride of General Santos City is currently in Los Angeles training for his coming 12-round bout with former World Boxing Council (WBC) champion Eric Morales.

Other than the traditional plaque handed out by the PSA, both Rosales and Pacquiao will also be given an Opus citation.

NBN-4 will cover the event as its annual sea host date. Announcing the affair hosted by amateur basketball star Alex Compton and Lala Sotto was Vin Cerilles.

PACQUIAO: Sportsman of the year

Pacquiao has bigger punch for Morales

By Freddie Roach as told to Sarah Trinidad

LOS ANGELES, California—I've always wanted Erik Morales. It's the bigger fight.

I believe it's the better fight for Manny Pacquiao.

Style-wise, it can be a much, much better fight than the Marquez fight.

Marquez is a stiff-y, effective boxer. But he doesn't make an interesting style against Manny.

We got a game plan against Marquez but we've no change that.

We've got to get in and dominate Morales.

There are rules on Barrera again, that's the next fight I would like for Manny.

Yes, there will be changes but they won't be drastic.

We will be working on the right hand. I want Manny to fight Morales with both fists.

Manny will have to grow from a fighter into a real boxer himself.

No, I can't say we've got the edge.

All I can say is that Morales is "lethality." He's easy to hit. Marquez is a lot more defensive.

Morales likes to exchange punches...and that would be his mistake.

Of course, Morales will be a little bigger. They fight at 130 pounds.

But Manny can carry himself well and he could also be a lot stronger.

Manny is mature enough.

Being a little taller, Morales likes to fight.

He likes to show off he can take a punch and that's gonna be his downfall.

That fight which Morales lost against Barrera?

I don't think it will have a telling effect.

But it could be used as a gauge.

Barrera says that was best he didn't dominate Morales.

If Barrera would beat him [Morales] like that, I think Manny can do a lot better.

Of course, we can't just stand in front of him.

Manny is moving into new territory.

Morales, taller, would fight a lot from outside.

But we will use that edge to inches by staying close.

We won't also push Manny all the way up to 130 pounds.

If he comes in at 126 or 127, that would be just fine.

Two or three pounds won't make much difference.

Manny does not have to come to Mexico.

He has the edge in speed, he has the better side as side moves.

Morales has the bigger punch.

Manny will be there at his best.

This will be a very exciting fight. The better man will win.

Colossal battle to lure 200 million viewers

IT WILL be a battle of global magnitude which reigning Ring Magazine bantamweight king Manny Pacquiao and Erik Morales fight over 12 rounds on March 19 in an unpreced 200 million people will get the chance to watch the fight "live."

Home Box Office, which will air the fight set at MGM's Grand Garden Arena, revealed that over 50 million pay-per-view homes will get the chance to witness the colossal matchup, and with a conservative estimate of four persons per household, should ready to 200 million people tuned in to see who between the two warriors has indeed got the rocks. That number is highly conservative, considering that almost everyone in the Philippines and Mexico will tune in for the bout.

"Fight fans are going to see an all-action fight from bell to bell," promised promoter Bob Arum who, together with Murad Muhammad, is putting up the show.

Meanwhile, the Pacquiao-Morales pay-per-view telecast has a suggested retail price of $44.95 per event.

Tickets for the fight, which are priced at $400, $300, $200, $125 and $75, are including applicable service charges and taxes, will go on sale Friday at the MGM Grand Garden Arena box office, according to Top Rank, Inc. Robert Lagambino, Event Desire

Nat'l five aspirants labor through fitness tests

Gilbert Manik huffed to the 40-spot, three-time Olympian puffed in the 50-yard shuttle run. And rookie Arwind Santos seemed chest-bumped the standing vertical leap.

In the end, however, 20 Philippine national basketball players and three amateur standouts cleared the view that the three-hour fitness test conducted by national coach Chot Reyes and strength and conditioning specialist Dennis Arroyo yesterday at the Moro Lorenzo Sports Center were a resounding success.

Gerebert Argay Hollerbrand, Mark Caguioa, Rommel Adducul and Manik came in full force, although Caguioa bagged off from undergoing the strenuous tests because of a sore knee.

Caguioa will join Talk 'N Text players Mark Telan, Sonny de Ocampo, Jimmy Alapag and Willie Miller on Saturday for the next round of tests, along with other available pros and amateurs.

Coca-Cola's John Arigo, Ali Peek and Asi Taulava will no longer take the tests, leaving done at last Dec. 30.

Reporting for the 8 a.m.-12 noon schedule at the Moro Lorenzo gym, other than the four Coca-Cola players, were Hector Ilagan, Jason Castro, Jeffrey Cariaso, Larry Fonacier and Lordy Tugado, who also asked to be tested later on Saturday. Harold Arboleda, Eric Arao and Rich Alvarez, Peerpleweld Billy Mamaril, and amateurs Anthony Wash-ington, Jiji Reyes and Serano.

"It's a definite plus if you go high scores," Reyes told the initial members of the RP training pool before the session began. "But it doesn't mean you won't be selected if you get low scores. This will just form the quantitative portion of the selection process."

The tests were conducted to determine the candidates' agility, strength, stamina, flexibility, footwork, leaping ability and speed. Total body fat was also measured.

The team league around 10 a.m.

First was a 50-day test around the facility's third floor trial followed by stretching exercises to cool the weights room.

Next was a series of leg-toughing footwork activities designed to determine a player's explosiveness, or lack of it.

The Kings' 6-foot-9 star center, however, topped the set-ups, the push-ups and the pull-ups, which left everybody sore and aching.

RTC INJUNCTION

Asi suspension stays, says Eala

By Jann Mercurio

THE PERMANENT injunction issued by a Manila court against the Department of Justice and the Bureau of Immigration on the cancellation of Asi Taulava's citizenship resulted in no stay added the Philippine basketball Association's earlier decision to suspend the Talk 'N Text center.

"The injunction was issued to stop the commission's deportation proceedings on Taulava. As far as I know, it has not touched on the DOJ findings, where the PBA based its decision," said Eala.

What removes the league more, Eala pointed out, is the ongoing case Taulava filed against the PBA in the Quezon City court. Taulava's lawyers had filed a motion to lift the suspension of the 2003 MVP twice but the QC-RTC had denied it on both occasions.

Eala said the league would study the implications of the injunction and at the same time consider how it would affect the stand of the PBA on Taulava.

The league suspended Taulava based on the findings of the DOJ, which ruled the citizenship papers of the Talk 'N Text star used for other Filipino players were spurious based on a fraudulent report.

"We will study it and present it to the Talk 'N Text management first. But to answer to them (TNT), they have not asked the league to lift Asi's suspension. I don't want to preempt any formal decision that could be made in the future," said Eala.

In a decision dated last Jan. 6, Judge Lopez said the DOJ and the BID cannot "disembroglio Asi Taulava from the basis of incontrovertible proof evidence which were gathered without affording him his day in court."

A holder of a Philippine passport, Taulava represented the Philippines in the 2004 Beijing Asian Games and has two daughters with Sol Philippine wife, the former Anna May M. Cervania. He won the PBA MVP award in 2003 playing for TNT.

The court said the DOJ and the BID, including the prosecutors handled by BID executive director Ret. Marcelo Ballad to investigate the alleged aliens playing in the PBA, had no authority and jurisdiction to cancel the recognition of Filipino citizenship (under identification certificate No. 020538) issued to Taulava four years ago.

TAULAVA gets another reprieve from the court.

Tigers force sudden death

CESCA CESCA held Purefoods scoreless in the final two minutes to post an 81-79 victory and force a sudden-death playoff in the Asian Wrestler PBA Philippine Cup last night at the Araneta Coliseum.

While throwing a defensive blanket on the 11 Hardings, the Tigers teamed up John Arigo, Asi Taulava and Rich Alvarez to limit Purefoods' reigning import Jeff Hardy to 17 points and force the 6'8 Hardings to hit the shell for boxscores in the quadrafinals.

Mommy's three-pointer and a mid-range jumper by Mommy put the Tigers ahead, 77-74, and then the 6'2 Hardings went cold, missing their last four shots.

"We reviewed the tape of Game 1 and found out that we committed several lapses in the final half even though we had the momentum (our lead of the time," said coach Chot Reyes (coach Ritchie Ritzenberg).

While committing less errors, the Tigers were sharper this time with Arigo firing 27 points and Asi Taulava adding 13 points. Jose Navarro

Eagles face Knights for q'final slot

If 5's win or lose for ABP-Araneta today.

The Eagles, suddenly in quarterfinal contention, try to sustain their impressive run when they meet the Toyota Otis Escalators Knights today in the PBL Open Championship at the Ilocos Sports Center.

"The game is so crucial for us as we need to play harder to prevail," said Eagles coach Sandy Arespacochaga of this all-or-knockout match with the Knights.

ABP-Araneta's quartet of lead characters need to look blank. But after stringing up recent victories, including back-to-back wins over formidable teams Shoemaker and Welcoat, the Eagles now have a shot at the quarterfinals.

A win gives ABP-Araneta the chance quarterfinal slot with the Knights and keeping hard hopes of advancing if ICTSI La Salle loses to powerhouse Welcoat to formally close they own two earlier victories over the workers.

If the Knights prevail, they would no

SEE ALSO: TODAY (Play) SCOTT SWING
11:30—Trinity Stone vs. Air Philippines
1 p.m.—ABP-Araneta vs. Toyota Otis Lifter

longer only be tag the Archers with them to the quarter finals as La Salle had taken Araneta Surveyors.

The Eagles, Knights and the Archers have identical 5-4 win-loss cards so far.

There will be no scrubs, though, for cranky Reyes when it faces lowly Air Philippines outfits at 2 p.m.

The Turtles, who are assured of a twice-to-beat advantage in the quarterfinals, will try to wrap up their elimination campaign with their straight victories.

The Eagles squandered their playoff chances against Toyota Scouts last Saturday after leading almost the entire game, they fell apart down the stretch and lost, 69-67.

"This happened to us many times," said coach Louie Alas then. "We had the game guarantee and then we lose in the end. We really need maturity to maintain our lead."

Indeed, Alas will try to avoid another huge collapse against the Eagles, who ruined the Knights in the first round, 5th-84.

Meanwhile, the Flight will try to avoid the ignominy of tying the league's longest losing skid at 12 games against Granny Goose, which is host, 78-75, in the first round.

Antonio M. Pato

Butch admits equipment delay looms

By Marc Anthony Reyes

PHILIPPINE Sports Commission officer in charge Butch Ramirez yesterday admitted that there might be a delay in the importation of equipment for the Southeast Asian Games, blaming the year due to the long process of bringing in large-scale sporting goods to the country.

Ramirez said the PSC, which will be at the forefront of such a deal, will have to raise for over of awards to organizers have to abroad which could take three months to complete.

"We only have 14 months to the SEA Games, so that would leave us with just seven months. That's if the equipment arrive on time," said Ramirez during his first media briefing at the Rizal Memorial Sports Complex.

The issue cropped up after a committee of the Philippine ASEAN Organizing Committee expressed concerns that the equipment won't come in time, which is crucial not only for the success of the national athletes but also for the country's hosting of the event.

Marinez secures IM title

FILIPINO National Master Rudy Martinez drew his ninth and final round match recently to secure himself of the International Master title in the 28th Vienna Open festival in Vienna, Italy. The Santiago, Isabela native Martinez of San Jose del Monte, Bulacan, split the point with Erik Mattes Gumpoldskirchen of Italy to secure 6.5 points, followed by Filipino Grandmaster Eddie Mesdejan Lucas of Pagsanjan, Jayvee Bernardo of Hungary, Michele Godena of Italy and Gabriele Bortolin, also of Italy. Martinez's total, however, was good enough to top the 6-way tied IM result. Another Filipino, Roland "Kaka" Sumalinog scored 6.5 points and finished in a tie for 6th to 8th places with GM Cesar Ortega and FM Leon Mednyd of Italy and GM Magin Benjamin of Venezuela. **BM Marlon Bernardino**

Bondad fires 71, leads RP Ladies Amateur by a shot

By Marvin B. Castillo

PRINCESS Bondad bogeyed her last two holes and still managed to shoot 71 yesterday and a one-stroke lead over Aimee Mae Ilac after 36 holes of the Susan Gold Philippine Ladies Amateur Open at the Manila Golf Club course.

Bondad finished with a 34-37 card, hitting six fairways and 11 greens in regulation to edge Ilac, who carded a 36-36 72 and settled for solo second.

Two-time junior champion finished her first four holes in the back nine to shoot 37-72, one stroke ahead of last year's Open champion Sopheal and Chonladol Soh of Singapore.

World Amateur veterans and former champion Genevieve Villaruel were not in going and clocked in with a 74 for solo fourth.

Aimee Agoso hit only six greens and submitted a 76, which Kirsten Ji Hong and Thai farmers Chonladol numbered as the best scores among the small-but-powerful foreign bets.

Hong Kong's Mak Nel Ann fired behind in a 76 while Nantapan Ariyanuwag of Thailand, her country's reigning national champion and winner of last year's Hong Kong Open, could do no better than eighth at 78.

The 17-year-old Ariyanuwag played the first 36 holes at even par then three-bogeyed a seven-hole stretch before she posted just nine while taking a fat 9 on the par-4 12th hole.

"I made a lot of silly mistakes today," said Bondad, the Australian-born daughter of Filipino parents.

After missing a three-foot birdie on

BONDAD: On track of her elite campaign of two.

the 16th, she rebanded her second shot on 17 and then hit a two-stroke swing to crash the green in two on the par-5 finisher after she was lucky to escape with a bogey.

Anya Tanjutco and Melissa Loh of Singapore were joint seventh with 77s over an 18-year-old Bettie Ailiria and last year's runner-up Lara Tadena-juleta's huge jump-started to 79s.

The Phil Christmas Foundation and Heroes Group and Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office are the major sponsors of the Open.

Top scoring scores

(Top 10 scores): 71—Bondad, P.; 72—Ilac, M.; 74—Villaruel, V.; 76—Agoso, A.; Hong, K.; 77—Tanjutco, A.; Loh, M.; 78—Ariyanuwag, N.; 79—Tadena, J.; Soh, C.; 80—Soh, S.; Lee, S.; 81—Ailiria, B.; Mak, N.; Ariyanuwag, N.; 82—Ailiria, J.; Lee, S.; Ariyanuwag, N.; 83—Ailiria, J.; Lee, S.; Ariyanuwag, N.; 84—Ailiria, J.; Lee, S.; Ariyanuwag, N.; 85—Ailiria, J.; Lee, S.; Ariyanuwag, N.; 86—Ailiria, J.; Lee, S.; Ariyanuwag, N.; 87—Ailiria, J.; Lee, S.; Ariyanuwag, N.;

Philtobo chief backs tests

By Edwin Villanueva, Contributor

"I HAVE always been in favor of the IBA [inquiry into cockfight controversy] and we can prove it."

Philtobo chief Democrito "Kenny" Mitra Jr. reclaimed this yesterday as he reaffirmed his solid support to the program initiated by the Philippine Racing Commission to combat the dreaded IBA.

"I'd like to categorically state that I will continue to back the fight against the IBA to ensure that all horses in Philippine racing and breeding industry are healthy and free from any infectious diseases," said Mitra as he disbanded reports that he refused to have his horses tested for the IBA virus.

In fact, Mitra stressed that he had his horses tested twice already in the past four months.

"Maybe some quarters interpreted me when I said that since my stable is located at the far end of a row of stables in Santa Ana, then I would be one of the last to be tested this time," said the affable Mitra, a respected horse owner-breeder. "As president of the Philippine Thoroughbred Owners and Breeders Organization and as avid horseracing enthusiast, I enjoin everyone in the industry to unite in safeguarding the health of all our horses."

Mitra and top officials of the Metropolitan Association of Race Horse Owners (Marho) and Makati Dev. Assn. de Sitarda (MADS) signed an agreement of support for the Philracom campaign against the IBA virus late last year.

The groups then reiterated Philracom chair Atienza Ching of their "100 percent support" during the Philtobo Fiesta Show in December.

That manifestation of unity got the nod of Reps. Norberto Abaska, Mikey Arroyo, Luis "Baby" Andaya, Mendiola Mitra and Mark Cojuangco.

Mitra's stable is one of the biggest in the country along with Sir Velli Angpi and Jess Floro's. Mitra owns noted local gallopers such as Elite, Windbus, Smokin' Bird, Star Factor, Paramount, In Command, Serendipitie Ella and Simply Gold as well as imports Monarchy, Montres and Guernica.

West's best tames beast of the east

PHOENIX—Amare Stoudemire scored 34 points Tuesday as the Phoenix Suns won their seventh straight, and 18th in 19 games, 120-107, over the Miami Heat in a matchup of the teams with the best record in the West and East.

All five Suns starters hit double figures—in the first half—and Phoenix increased its NBA-best record to 31-6 in the sixth four-point lead by a team with four losses or less before Thursday. Four of the five ahead of them were on to win the NBA title.

"I did a little bit of everything," Stoudemire said. "I tried to fill it up so [Shawn] Marion, [Joe] Johnson and [Steve Nash] could get open. I figured he was going to back up a little bit and let me shoot, and when he came out, I took it to the rack and tried to get fouls or make plays for my teammates."

Shawn Marion added 25 points and 11 rebounds, Steve Nash 18 points and 15 assists and Joe Johnson 17 points and nine rebounds for the Suns, who topped 120 points for the second game in a row and seventh time this season.

"I don't know that I've seen a quicker tempo in my 10 years in the league," Miami coach Stan Van Gundy said. "They've got great athletes at every position."

Dwyane Wade had 36 points and 11 rebounds, but the Heat—beaten at Seattle on Sunday—lost two in a row for only the second time this season.

In East Rutherford, New Jersey, Rasheed Wallace had 19 points and 13 rebounds for Detroit, and Nene Hilario added 18 points and 10 rebounds as he joined star Richard Jefferson with another win of the regular season, 89-80.

Jefferson, dressed in all black, [illegible] from the bench as the Nets got 28 points from Vince Carter, 15 from Jason Kidd and 13 from Jason Kidd while losing for the fourth time in five games.

In Cleveland, LeBron James scored 29 points and helped Cleveland rally from a 9-point deficit in the fourth quarter to beat Charlotte, 100-98, for its fifth straight victory.

Bevin Knight tied a career high with 20 points for the Bobcats, who lost for the eighth time in nine games. Gerald Wallace and Primoz Brezec led Charlotte with 18 points apiece.

In New York, Baron Davis had 21 points and 11 assists to give the New Orleans/Oklahoma City Hornets their fifth win in six games over New York and its first winning streak of the season.

In Atlanta, Tyrone Lue scored a season-high 18 points and Josh Smith (eleven points) in double figures as the Hawks beat Milwaukee, 103-85, and snapped a six-game losing streak.

In Memphis, Tennessee, Jermaine O'Neal capped a 25-point night by crushing two breakaway slams with 4.6 seconds left to help Indiana stop Memphis' six-game winning streak with an 89-85 triumph.

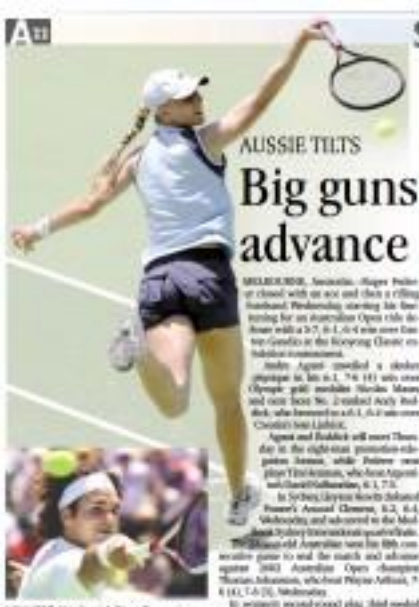
O'Neal, who was 12-of-23 from the field, grabbed 12 rebounds.

Ron Artest had 28 points and four blocks for Memphis, and recorded the 5,000th point and 3,000th block of his career in just 275 games. Only nine players have reached the milestones faster.

In Sacramento, California, Peja Stojakovic scored 27 points, Mike Bibby added 18 and the short-handed Kings extended Denver's losing streak to five consecutive in 17 games with a 109-100 victory.

In Seattle, Ray Allen scored 31 points and Vladimir Radmanovic had nine of his 14 points in the fourth quarter, helping Seattle deal Los Angeles its second straight loss, 116-99.

AP



AUSSIE TILTS

Big guns advance

MELBOURNE, Australia—Roger Federer closed with an ace and then a rifling forehand Wednesday, starting his first serving for an Australian Open title defense with a 6-7, 6-1, 6-4 win over Gastón Gaudio in the Kooyong Classic exhibition tournament.

Andre Agassi unveiled a slicker physique in his 6-1, 7-6 (4) win over Olympic gold medalist Nicolas Massu and next faces No. 2-ranked Andy Roddick, who breezed to a 6-1, 6-3 win over Croatia's Ivan Ljubicic.

Agassi and Roddick will meet Thursday in the eight-man promotion-exhibition. Lleyton Hewitt—next year's Australian Open champion—had an [illegible] match and advanced against 2002 Australian Open champion Thomas Johansson, who beat Wayne Arthurs, 7-6 (4), 7-5 [3], Wednesday.

In women's second-round play, third-seeded Elena Dementieva beat Dinu Pescariu, 6-3, 3-6, 6-2; Daniela Hantuchova beat Nathalie Dechy-Hamanova, 6-0, 6-2; and Samantha Stosur of Australia, a finalist in last week's Gold Coast tournament, beat Tatiana Golovin of France, 6-2, 4-6, 6-2.

AP

WINNERS 411: Russia's Elena Dementieva gracefully plays a backhand en route to beating Eleni Daniilidou, 6-2, 7-6, in L at the Sydney international tournament. At the Kooyong classic, World No. 1 Roger Federer defeated Gaston Gaudio, 7-7, 6-1, 6-4. AFP/REUTERS

PHOENIX HEAT CENTER Shaquille O'Neal gets doubled by Phoenix Suns forward Amare Stoudemire (left) and Quentin Richardson (right). AP

SPORTSWATCH

PBA hits the mats anew

THE DEFUNCT Philippine Basketball Association will host its first basketball fans and enthusiasts in a season-opening fan of fun and games when they would be given an exclusive to meet and greet their favorite players and teams outside of the playing court. The PBA Tenderfoot Cup Media, "the event kicks off on Jan. 15 with 10 of the top pro stars expected to grace the grand launch at Ever Grand Central. Ben Dee Cole Figuro and the Purefoods Tender Juicy Hotdogs will be there to sign autographs and pose for photos with the fans. Also hosting classes marketing day on Jan. 29. The mall hosting Dec. opening of the Ever Gotesco Commonwealth Manila, Andito Ang Fun and More. Hanford, Asian Land, JVC, will be there at Ever Commonwealth on Feb. 1-15 with the Talk 'N Text Phone Pals gracing the event on Feb. 5, the San Miguel Beermen on Feb. 5, and the Shell Turbochargers on Feb. 10.

Yulo golf eyes record field

WITH 83 teams already listed, the 21st Jose Yulo Memorial golf tournament hoped to draw a record field when it is staged Jan. 29-31at the north-golf course of the Clubhouse golf complex. More teams are expected to register before the Jan. 27 deadline. Joaquin Yao and guest partner Blessed Tolosan back to defend their crown they won last year but they are expected to have their hands full against a field that includes the country's top amateurs Jack Paganoni, and duos Neil Royal Tanquinco and Wes Ortal, Rogelio Perez & ongoing Fee details: call Fely Ibarlo at (045) 840-1265/840-1241, Dark Paladin and Rudy Cardenas at (045) 459-3321, (632) 519-39 ID to fill out the Ballast Office in Mabie Angeles at 951-6000 or 890-6001.

Drag race season-ender blasts off

THE (0.5 f drag race enthusiasts will go action in the season-ender of the 2004 Petron Blaze Blended National Drag Race Championship Series at Subic today, Jan. 13 at Star Fleet Inside Clark Special Economic Zone in Pampanga. After qualifying rounds, Joey Gatong, Boom Hernandez, Nelson Pamintuan and Ayabel Sabert will have to battle it out for the final race of the year to determine who will be the 2004 PRC-sanctioned Petron Blaze Blended National Drag Race Championship. Series is sponsored by Petron Blaze and Eliseo in cooperation with Fleetwise Motoring School, motorists.com.ph, pinoydragracing.com, 911.5-9-1-0-0 M and World Fun. For inquiries, call or text 0919-51-57-7866.

NCA championship, int'l derby slated

ELECTRONIC cockfight action resumes today at the fully air-conditioned Manila Coliseum as the Philippine Cockers Association (PCA) 7-Cock Derby championship round starts at 1 p.m. The preeminent team of known and formidable Gambing Engagings and Gen. Sy Pesaro dominated the derby's three Tuesday night after their two entries piled up six victories in as many fights. The trio of Pinoy Showdown and Star by Ramon produced the nine victories. Brgy. Barangay Talisman's will be the focus of cockers' attention tomorrow on Jan. 14, (5) and (12) as this crucial meeting World Slasher Cup & Cock international Derby unfolds. The event features local champions against overseas bread-derby stars from the USA, Mexico, Malaysia and Japan.

Religion bash stakes P4 million, Pajero

A GLAMOUR ECO spectacle of P4 million plus a brand new Pajero is at stake when the Religion Mega Cockpit's 15th Anniversary 7-Cock Derby gets going from January 29 to February 5. Four separate 2-cock elimination rounds are set on January 29, 31 / February 2 & 5. Day champion prizes of P 500,000 for each elimination event used the three pointers. Those with two points or less in the elimination rounds can still clinch the semifinals of contests 7 with a day champion prize of P400,000. The 8-cock championship takes center stage on Feb. 8. Foundation Power hosts is the exclusive sponsor of the event.

SHANG CINEPLEX
1 OCEAN'S TWELVE
3 BLADE TRINITY
2 KUNG FU HUSTLE
4 RAISE YOUR VOICE
PREMIERE THEATRE
OCEAN'S TWELVE
Shangri-La Plaza

PSA honors top . . .

(Turn to page 22)

RTU dominates college games

THE RIZAL Technological University Technicians dominated the first day of the athletic events by bagging eleven golds, six silvers and six bronzes in the 17th RIZALIAN GAMES yesterday at Rizal Memorial Sports Complex.

Rodolfo Jandoc collected three golds to lead RTU's charge. Jandoc conquered his first gold at the 56kg weightlifting event with 160 kg. Gold at on his last jump hoisting teammate Loudemar Domingo behind with 1.65 m. After just three hours, Bantile registered his second gold in the long jump.

He also helped the host-based runners to victory in the 4 x 100 meter relay for his third gold.

RTU's Pauly Gandeza reigned. Valerie Gene Cera of RTU Brgy Campus who landed two golds by conquering opponents in shot put and discus throw.

Jonalyn Pale added to the Technicians romp with two golds and a silver. Pale's other came after losing to defending Rosalyn Mendoza in the 400 m run final.

The Technicians collected golds in the 110-m men's hurdles, 400-m women's run, men's high jump, men's 4 x 100 m relay and the women's 5,000-m run.

"We really need this performance to achieve our dreams, to rule this RIZAL Games and be the overall champion this year," said RTU president Dr. Jose Macalalag.

MEET PRODUCTS: Nike - Converse - Salomon

Arigo hopes to make RP final roster

JOSE Arigo's dreams of representing the country have taken a huge first step when he was selected as part of the initial 60 man pool from which national coach Chot Reyes will call to be national team.

Now, he wants to go out and prove something.

"Some are saying I'm a shoo-in because I play under coach Chot [with Coca-Cola]," Arigo said. "But I don't want to be too confident because I know the competition is tight."

"I will play harder than usual because it is the only way to prove I'm a worthy candidate," Arigo, 24, said.

The Ateneo guru spent his first four seasons with Alaska Milk after being drafted fourth overall in 2001, before getting traded to Coca-Cola this year.

Arigo's size and shooting ability make it easy for him to create his own shots, unlike standing mates who must find themselves open or create off screens to be able to score.

Arigo, a two-time National Selection and All-Star member, was a part of the 2003 Alaska team that bagged the Invitational conference title.

He also contributed to one of two National pool squads that played in the 1986 to 2000 less Alaska pulled him out because of the team's manpower problems then.

The movie in my mind

THE BEST thing we have, Manny Pacquiao will fight Mike Tyson.

Oh, if that goes, Jayson, Pacquiao could be up against Vitaly Klitschko.

Many of members of the two commissioners and we must read in the papers that Muhammad Ali will come out of retirement to fight The Mauler, you'd never believe it.

To the holdouts, to the still undelivering legions out there, there's nothing impossible in boxing, especially in sports, every thing's possible.

Roberto Duran became Ringo Ray Leonard.

Tommy "The Hitman" Hearns versus Marvelous Marvin Hagler.

Ali-Frazier III.

Name it, you got it.

Even a Rebolledo-Pintanar bout could be in the offing.

Or a Rolando Bautista-Ali.

Basilio Cortillo should not be embarrassed, to be pitted against Oscar Dela Hoya and they'd still be fine.

Whether it's the Pilipino or the Sweetest, the Nineties or the 2000s, everything's the same. Scrapping, mauling, brawling will remain the real fight thrills of sports. Forever.

Manny Pacquiao's odyssey began with a repeated rematch with Jean Manuel Marquez. That was changed to a Pacquiao-Barrera rematch. Then Pacquiao wants to African, whose tongue twisters of a name escapes my mind for now.

What we saw instead was a Pacquiao getting himself pitted against a human flattery from Thailand, who was tragedy wasted as a threadbare knockout artist but who seemed just to be asked. But of course. In four rounds, the Thai lay painfully on the floor, not knowing where he was, what his fame.

Must be knotted out Ledesma, the African world champion some years back, Pacquiao would have touched the light version but a world class fighter's pride will not allow it, you don't also believe the he peddled apar ego that, at one stage, the world was his.

It is said that a nation is born every minute.

In boxing, almost everybody outside the sport's inner circle, is a rocker.

So, if Tyson, is enticed for another fight, crowds will come to watch him. Never mind that he's made a fool of himself in his last three fights. Boxing buffs are the most gullible: they believe everything. Like lovers blinded by emotion more than reason, they always let witchery have its sway over their senses.

So, all right, we are told that Pacquiao will indeed fight Mike Tyson, the "Monster Mauler" he had floored three times in the first round last May before receiving the shock of his life: a split decision after 12 rounds.

In "Mendoro" jokes would be Erik Morales, the "El Terrible" of Mexico.

The reason given was that guru wanted $1.5 million, including the P50,000 offered him to fight the game on Feb. 26.

Whether true or not, what we are being told now is a Pacquiao-Morales fight, reportedly in March, three that came about, stand by for further developments. Already, we have Pacquiao the first to say: "I mean fight."

Valor apart we hope the fight—if ever it happens.

As I said, there's nothing definite to be seeing, a fight is not over on ears when two bouts are already atop the ring ready to answer the first bell.

With the third man not in the ring—the referee, mumm—what we have is a movie, not a fight. Starring Chagles, Errol Dolphy.

***

DOTHRAK. The world-class Power Bowl at Rockwell in Makati has a new high performance, low-conditioning medium that ensures a high level of play. Even the world-class all-rounder Bowlers but for beginners, as well. Called the "Elite" by Brgyl, the machine is worth P1.2 million. My tablets to Power Bowl, given the "Outstanding Bowling Center Award" by the National Consumer Affairs Foundation last year, two years. Also, nice user doing that down. Kids to Power Bowl in the arcs-game house especially provided for the "Side ones" just starting to play the game. Only at Rockwell.

SPECTATOR

Al S. Menahaza

BUSINESS

Editor Raoul D. Marcelo
Assistant Editor Corrie S. Martinez

Peso rallies to 5-mo. high of 55.91:$1

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE PESO yesterday rallied to a five-month high against the US dollar, appreciating to the 55.91 level on a string of favorable local economic news and expectations of foreign investment inflows.

The local currency hit an intraday high of 55.85 before closing at 55.91 against the greenback, up from Tuesday's closing rate of 56.07. It was the peso's strongest closing rate since Aug. 16 last year.

Value turnover at the Philippine Dealing System stood at $337.5 million.

Local currency traders said the approval of most currencies in the region was spurred by the sentiment from the US Treasury that it would let market forces decide on the fate of the dollar, hinting that it would let the US currency weaken to make US exports more competitive in the global market.

Likewise cited as a beneficial factor was a comment from the European central bank urging the central banks in Asia to let their currencies strengthen to ease pressures on the euro.

Other currencies in the fourteast Asian region, such as the Thai baht and the Indonesian rupiah, likewise gained against the US dollar yesterday.

Aside from the weakening of the US dollar, Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Governor Rafael Buenaventura said the peso's rally was backed by the strategic influx of portfolio and foreign direct investments into the country.

Banco de Oro Universal Bank chief strategist Jonathan Ravelas said that aside from global factors, the peso was now gaining ground on improved domestic economic outlook.

"There's a spate of good news. Exports are now doing better than last year, the stock market is going up and the government is expected to keep its budget deficit this year below the ceiling," Ravelas said.

Finance Secretary Juanita Amatong earlier said the government might be able to speed up its fiscal consolidation and reject the budget deficit by 2006 or 2005, or earlier than the 2010 target.

The National Treasurer's Office also expected Tuesday that the country's export earnings rose by 19.5 percent to hit $33.69 billion in November, the highest growth rate in more than two years.

"In light of the weakening of the US dollar, we expect to see this [peso] level sustained in the coming months," Tuesday said, noting that the passage of key tax reform bills in Congress should further support the strengthening of the local currency.

Ravelas said he expected the peso to end at about 55.90 to the dollar in the first quarter of the year.

Tan submits best offer for Del Monte stake

TYCOON Lucio Tan is likely to buy Indian group Cithe's 40-percent stake in Del Monte Pacific after administrators of the bankrupt food group lacked his bid, according to a business dispatch yesterday quoting sources in Milan, Italy.

Citra defaulted on more than 1 billion euros ($1.31 billion) of bonds in late 2003 and is being liquidated after investors rejected a rescue restructuring plan. The three administrators are selling assets to raise cash to partly repay debt.

Tan and Manila-based food and drinks group San Miguel Corp. were the final bidders for the 40-percent stake in Del Monte Pacific, a Philippine-law listed in Singapore. The stake is worth $100 million at market prices.

"The administrators have considered Tan's bid to be the best," Reuters quoted one of its sources. "Now the [industry ministry is to approve the deal." Sources said its sources did not give details of Tan's bid and the administrator's declined to comment on the matter.

The ministry is expected to decide on the sale by the end of this week, it added.

Tan, one of the richest people in the Philippines and the region, owns stakes in Philippine Airlines, Asia Brewery, Fortune Tobacco, Philippine National Bank and Allied Bank. Forbes Magazine said the tobacco and beer-up

TANG B2

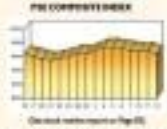
Currencies

PESO-DOLLAR RATE

GOLD: $422.50-422.90

Stock Market

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX



(See stock market report on Page B3)

Shares close 1.37% lower on security concerns

SHARE prices closed 1.37 percent lower yesterday as investors sold down major stocks following Wall Street's losses overnight and amid renewed security concerns, dealers said.

They said the slow start in Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co.'s (PLDT) American Depositary Receipts (ADR) listed in New York also weighed heavily on investor sentiment.

The Philippine Stock Exchange composite index fell 35.70 points or 1.80% to 1,950.61 after trading between 1,971.39 and 1,949.83.

Volume totaled 1.11 billion shares worth P1.23 billion from 2,206 issues traded, 1,000 shares worth P882.1 million on Tuesday.

The broader all-shares index fell 23.23 points to 1,980.81.

Losers beat gainers 98 to 78, with 56 stocks unchanged. AFP

Sale
Up To
40% Off
on sale items
Ladieswear • Menswear • Lingerie • Toiletries
MARKS & SPENCER
Glorietta 4 (752-7471) • Greenbelt 3 (757-4818) • Shangri-La Plaza Mall (637-3480)
Alabang Town Center (642-4558) • SM Megamall A (638-6818) • Robinsons Place Manila (522-7671/78)
Ayala's Harrison Plaza (526-8857) • Power Plant Mall (893-0948-49) • Ayala Center Cebu (032-234-1805)
Robinsons Starmills Pampanga (036-3547-49) • Robinsons Galleria East Wing (634-4134)
Gateway Mall Araneta Center (913-8154 / 912-4339) • SM City Nuevo Edsa (927-7560/61)
Rustan Marketing Specialists, Inc. (RMSI) is the official franchisee of Marks & Spencer in the Philippines
Offer is valid from January 13 - February 16, 2005

Money is called, phew is chosen

BREAKTIME

Conrado B. Bonal III

GLUTTONY climb is every credit rating outfit in the world history, this core administration of Gloriosetta is, at the moment, a bit hard up on cash. It is only P300 billion short, okay!

No wonder then that the 11 million jobless cannot stop all evil morning, noon and you—jumped for joy upon hearing the good news.

And that is, this broke core administration just gave up some P16 billion in funding from the Japanese government. Again...that's P16 billion!

What could be the strangely amusing reason for its doing that? Well, it's precisely because this core administration does not have ... well, money.

It may be a case of the dog chasing its own tail on top of a spinning ball; we s running around. But I smell the wrong.

* * *

RETORTED by this core administration to the Japan Bank for International Cooperation, or JBIC, were several items for this petty thing called infrastructure.

It seems this core administration does not have what is called "counterpart" money for the JBIC infrastructure funding.

After all, what do we need infrastructure for, if not for this \$ window thing called economic development, simply known among government economists as "growth?"

In fact, economic growth is the one and only answer to poverty, which is the result of those 11 million or so people's being so freaking jobless.

It doesn't take rocket science, or something like that, to know that we cannot solve poverty until Gloriosetta's frequent visits to depressed areas to bring lots of chest instead of jobs.

* * *

BY SECONDS, therefore, people are seeing that our only way around fast and furious work on infrastructure is through private initiatives.

With private investments in infrastructure, however, we have a lot of work to do. We don't seem to know how to go about it.

That protracted quarrel over the Main Terminal 3, featuring the government and the private sector, is the perfect bad example.

But aside from various crisis-causing inconsistencies when it comes to datelbilities prior talks, projects, our government does not mind talking to resort time-making decisions.

Last month, a proposal for a \$1.2 billion light rail project made its long journey to the Cabinet for final approval. Only heaven knows when it will come.

* * *

AFTER a couple of years going through a series of pro-Labinet government approvals, the MRT 7 project finally made it to the Cabinet.

My latest info is that foreign investors, eager to join the project, have been dying to lose weird brains in Cabinet.

Among them is the German group called Siemens, which is expected to assume the lead role on the project, once it pays a huge stake in the MRT 7 consortium.

The project already went through the so-called "first pass" with the DOTC, which, as defined it to, the Socio-Investment Coordinating Council, chaired by Gloriosetta herself.

After the "final" (hopefully) approval of the Cabinet, the project must then go through a so-called Investor Challenge.

This has nothing to do with secret bank accounts, because the "Swiss challenge" is just an opening for other groups to unsol the project from the original proponent.

* * *

HOPEFULLY, if no other group comes forward to offer the government another "deal" for MRT 7, the project will see its financial closing by the end of the year.

Hopefully again, the construction can start soon after, and in three to four years, the new train system will start running. Phew!

But such a timetable can only come true, if the original proponent is chosen.

Otherwise, if a blessed new group comes out, we start all over again. Meaning, another four to five years of paper work on approval and such!

And any delay will be bad for us. For one, the interest of foreign groups in MRT 7 is a clear signal of the return of foreign investors' confidence in the country.

As I said, the train project will cost about \$1.2 billion. It does not even include the real estate development of the 300-hectare train depot. This is one whole city.

* * *

SOME real estate portion can easily cost at least \$500 million easily or about P30 billion, depending on the peso exchange rate by the time the project pushes through.

Said to be interested in the real estate developments, of course, is one of the local groups in the consortium, none other than Tanalig heavy hi's SM group.

Tanny may again bestow the real estate development with another one of his huge malls, every one of which is almost the size of the municipality of San Juan.

We need this MRT 7 project, and surely many more like it, if only for its ripple effects in the construction sector.

It will create more jobs, particularly for the unskilled workers, who can only work either as laborers in construction projects or as counters of coffins planes.

* * *

ODE simple innovation in investment mirrors, meanwhile, is attracting interest in the business sector. It is being promoted by the SEC.

You see, the SEC recently ruled (then the acquisition by the foreign [Dutch] group called Cemex of the listed local company called Union Cement is not covered by the "tender offer" rule.

The SEC ruling turned some eyebrows to business as high as the dome of the Senate's session hall.

Under the rule, if you want to take majority control of a listed company, you must offer to buy out all the other minority stockholders. It's for the protection of the public.

Cemex simply bought the holding company, which owns more or less 30 percent of Union Cement—not Union Cement itself—and presto—it got away from the rule.

To top it all, the SEC said it was okay.

From now on, business can simply form holding companies, and holdings in them instead of holdings in listed firms, and the tender offer rule is gone. What to remember!

* * *

STILL, the case of the Cemex takeover of the listed Union Cement boom scrubbing, because the complainant before the SEC is not going to.

It is the National Life Insurance which is a minority stockholder of Union Cement. The company is asking the SEC to force Cemex to follow the rule.

Recently, it presented to the SEC an argument that, in effect, the cemex says "type of acquisition," whether it takes holding/holding companies or under the skin of your mother-in-law.

The rule is contained in the Securities Regulations Code, which Congress passed above final point ego.

National Life Insurance even presented to the SEC minutes of the bicameral committee on the passage of the law.

The provision for tender offer, based on the minutes, was intended to address the interest of the minority stockholders, pointed.

It is mandatory in either words, and mandatory means no exception.

Smart raises Meridian stake

By Clarissa S. Batino

MOBILE phone leader Smart Communications Inc. has acquired an additional 9 percent of Meridian Telekoms Inc., bringing its stake in the high-speed Internet provider to 49 percent.

The country's largest wireless phone company said it would acquire the remaining majority stake of Meridian from its current shareholders before the end of this year.

Smart bought 40 percent of Meridian in September 2004 for an undisclosed amount but basing on the par value of P100 per share, the 2.5 million common shares in Meridian are worth P250 million.

Smart's acquisition of the 9 percent followed the National Telecommunications Commission's approval last Dec. 22 of Meridian's petition to allow the transfer of common shares.

Meridian's shareholders can now invest under the BTO's approval for any change in ownership according to the report.

Meridian must also secure the go-ahead of the Congress before it could sell 100 percent of the company's equity.

Meridian is a broadband player formerly controlled by the family of Mark Jimenez.

Established in 1996, Meridian operates a data leased network and an international leased line, allowing it to provide high-speed broadband Internet access to its subscribers.

Manila Water to sell shares to the public

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

MANILA Water Co. Inc. of the Ayala group, the water distributor in the East Zone, plans to offer P4.15 billion worth of shares to interested and local investors by March.

In a report to the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), Manila Water planned to sell the shares at a minimum of P6 apiece.

Manila Water plans to sell as many as 621 million common shares, consisting of 526 million primary shares and 200 million shares held by Ayala Corp. and Indonesia, 80% Capital and its employees.

The bulk of the common shares will be sold on the international markets with 261 million shares set aside for the international tranche in February, followed by the sale of up to 249 million for the domestic offer in March.

Manila Water will use the proceeds for capital expenditure, concession fee payments and general corporate purposes, it said in its report.

Manila Water has tapped as managers ING Capital Corp. and SBC Investment Bank for its public offering.

Investment banks target March 15 as the listing date for the shares.

Manila Water generated P4.2 billion in revenues last year up from P3.78 billion in 2003, based on unaudited figures, to net earnings closed at P1.34 billion last year from P1.11 billion in 2003.

Last year, the International Finance Corp. (IFC), the private sector arm of the World Bank invested \$45 million in Manila Water, which has been operating the East concession of the privatized Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) since 1997.

The brought IFC's investments in Manila Water to \$75 million (P4.2 billion). Its shares down into \$31 million in equity. \$30 million in fresh loan facilities, and a P3400 million equivalent peso loan denominated in 2003.

The water company was formed only in August 1997.

Private investment into that urban-tied metering is unsustainable network losses (up to 63 percent), Manila Water managed to turn the company around to become one of the country's fastest growing organizations.

Other water concessionaires are Ayala Corp.-United Utilities in leading water and power company in the United Kingdom), Mitsubishi Corp. of Japan (one of the largest trading firms in the world) and BWC capital.

Tan submits . . .

From page B1

cent has a net worth of \$1.6 billion. Tan ranked 126th in Forbes' recent list of the 40 richest people in Southeast Asia recently.

The Lawton family owns 20 percent of Del Monte Pacific, giving it five-call rights on Cosco slide. MCI Inc., the holding company of the Lawtons, has the right to match any final offer that Cosco would submit except for its shares.

JBIC, Southeast Asia's biggest food and beverage firm, is not likely to jack up its bid for the 46-percent Del Monte Pacific stake.

Sources familiar with JBIC's activities said the company was outlined by the reports and was focusing on its bid to acquire control of National Foods Ltd., Australia's dairy giant.

A successful acquisition of Del Monte Pacific would have allowed JBIC to expand its food and beverage trade into the Indian subcontinent.

JBIC said it saw major opportunities in Del with its replacement offer of \$1.27 billion for control of National Foods for \$1.27 billion.

National Foods is Australia's biggest milk processor. Its products include milk, yoghurt, gourmet cheese and cream. The board of National Foods unanimously backed JBIC's offer and encouraged shareholders accept it in the absence of a superior proposal. With a report from Elizabeth L. Sanchez

DISCLOSURES

LEDITHA Antonette de Taduo has changed the owner of its Jan. 20 annual stockholders' meeting, from its as-noted office in San Miguel, Tarlac City to 6/F JCI Building, 113 Dela Rosa St., Legaspi Village, Makati City.

* * *

AUGUSTO D Miro has been elected director of Bankbanda Inc., replacing Stanley Bagamaspa, who resigned from that post but who will remain as general manager.

* * *

ELPIDIO Ibañez, president and chief operating officer of First Philippine Holdings Corp., acquired 1,000 shares of FPHC stock. *Compiled by O.J. Tan, PSE Research*

olivetti

OFFICE

OFFICE

OFFICE

SANYO

www.allsmartmachines.inc.com

PLDT exceeds P24-B profit target for 2004

By Cielrae S. Bedoy

PHILIPPINE Long Distance Telephone Co. has substantially exceeded its P24-billion profit target in 2004 due to higher recurring income and one-time gains from the consolidation of investee businesses, its top official said.

PLDT's affiliate Philippine Telephone Corp. reported an extraordinary gain of about P1.7 billion last year. Analysts said the market had already priced in a P20.64-billion 2004 net income (or) (PLDT's share) or so.

PLDT's single biggest shareholder, First Pacific Co. Ltd., is also leveraging on the telecom giant's profitability to raise low-priced funds, which the parent company would use to expand in the region.

First Pacific yesterday said it was selling $1.06 million, 5-year zero coupon debt notes convertible into PLDT shares. First Pacific owns about 24 percent of PLDT.

PLDT chief Manuel Pangilinan, who is also managing director of First Pacific, said the regional firm was now ready to invest again. He said telecom and infrastructure were top picks for the group.

He stressed the Hong Kong-based conglomerate, which in bid bidding the capital of the Salim family of Indonesia, would not give up its stake in PLDT.

"We have no intention of selling down at all in PLDT. This is just a financing exercise for First Pacific and we included an equity kicker which in PLDT so lower the cost of our borrowing," Pangilinan said in an interview.

There are cash settlement options under the agreement, he said, that would allow First Pacific to satisfy the exchange rights without affecting the company's investment in PLDT.

"It is fully our intention to maintain our present level of investment in PLDT," he said.

The telecom giant's recurring income alone, according to Pangilinan, already exceeded the P24-billion profit target last year. "We are definitely not in a fiscal

PSBank
US Dollar
TIME DEPOSIT

Earn as high as 3.5%

	$1,000 to $9,999	$10,000 to $49,999	$50,000 & up
1 month	2.500%	2.750%	3.000%
2 months	2.750%	3.000%	3.250%
3 months	3.000%	3.250%	3.500%
6 months	3.250%	3.250%	3.500%
12 months	3.250%	3.500%	3.500%

Visit any of our 130 PSBank Branches nationwide.

VOLVO ADVISORY

THE 2004 PRICE PROTECTION PROGRAM FOR THE VOLVO RANGE OF LUXURY VEHICLES IS UNTIL JANUARY 31, 2005.

THE LOCAL LUXURY CAR MARKET EXHIBITS DYNAMISM TO A HILT AS IT OFFERS NEW BRANDS, UPDATED MODELS AND BETTER VARIANTS. ALONG WITH THIS, HOWEVER, ARE FACTORS THAT SOMEHOW THREATEN TO DIMINISH THE VITALITY OF THE MARKET LIKE INCREASED FREIGHT ON BOARD (FOB) COSTS, FOREIGN EXCHANGE FLUCTUATIONS AND IMPORT REGULATIONS.

IN AN EFFORT TO ADDRESS THESE ISSUES, VOLVO ANNUALLY UPDATES ITS PRICE PROTECTION PROGRAM. THE VOLVO PRICE PROTECTION PROGRAM COVERS ALL AREAS THAT HELP MAXIMIZE THE VALUE GARNED BY ITS CUSTOMERS. INTEGRAL ELEMENTS OF THE PROGRAM ARE (1) THE EFFICIENT MANAGEMENT OF STOCKS TO ENSURE ALL PRODUCTS AVAILABLE FOR PURCHASE ARE THE LATEST AND FRESHEST OFF THE PRODUCTION LINE; (2) EXTENDED SUPPORT FROM VOLVO CAR CORPORATION IN SWEDEN TO OFFSET THE FLUCTUATIONS OF COSTS DUE TO IMPORTATION, TAXATION, AND ECONOMIC DOWNTURNS.

VOLVO OFFERS PACKAGES THAT GIVES THE MOST VALUE FOR PURCHASES THEIR CLIENTS MAKE. THE VOLVO PRICE PROTECTION PROGRAM PRESENTS CLIENTS A RARE OPPORTUNITY TO REWARD THEMSELVES WITH LUXURY, POWER, AND PRESTIGE ALL IN ONE VALUE-LADEN PACK. THIS IS THE TIME TO DRIVE HOME ANY VEHICLE FROM OUR MODEL LINE-UP IN THE EASIEST, MOST CONVENIENT WAY POSSIBLE.

THE 2004 PRICE PROTECTION PROGRAM FOR THE VOLVO RANGE OF LUXURY VEHICLES IS UNTIL JANUARY 31, 2005.

WE ADVISE ALL THOSE WHO WISH TO AVAIL OF THE MOST **COMPETITIVE PRICING AND FINANCING OWNERSHIP PACKAGES** OF THE VOLVO RANGE TO **RACE TO THE NEAREST VOLVO SHOWROOM NOW.**

VOLVO for life

Singapore Airlines
Travelog

New Year deals, travel in January!

SINGAPORE US$199	JAKARTA US$299
BANGKOK US$249	SURABAYA US$299
KUALA LUMPUR US$249	BRISBANE US$399
PENANG US$249	PERTH US$399
DENPASAR US$299	SYDNEY US$479

Book and buy ONLINE at www.singaporeair.com/ph

FirstPac sells $199M in debt notes to finance expansion

HONG KONG/MANILA—First Pacific Co. Ltd., a Southeast Asia diversified conglomerate, has purchased itself the equivalent of nearly $199 million in debt outstanding to shore up its 24 percent-held Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. (PLDT).

"We're now ready to invest again in telecommunications infrastructure," First Pacific managing director Manuel Pangilinan said in an interview.

Pangilinan, who is also chair of PLDT, said First Pacific planned to maintain its 24-percent stake in PLDT.

"First Pacific has no plans whatsoever of dropping all or reducing our substantial interest in PLDT," he said in a later statement. "This is simply a financing exercise and it is fully our intention to maintain our present level of investment in PLDT."

PLDT shares fell 2.94 percent to P1,510 early yesterday afternoon. Trading of First Pacific shares were suspended before the start of trade.

First Pacific said the five-year zero coupon notes exchangeable to PLDT shares at P1,645.8, a 23 percent premium to the stock's Tuesday close of 1,368, a source familiar with the situation said.

Analysts in Manila said PLDT's fall, which helped drag the main stock index down 1.21 percent, was due more to profit-taking than concern the bond sale would dilute First Pacific's stake in PLDT.

PLDT's revenues, profits and share price have soared in the past two years on strong demand for mobile phone services in the Philippines.

Pangilinan said there would be no significant dilution of First Pacific's stake because bondholders also had an option to convert the debt to cash. The $100 million bond value is equivalent to about 1.6 percent of PLDT's outstanding shares.

Pangilinan also said PLDT's net profit for 2004 was expected to be higher than its target of P24 billion.

"Recurring (income) is estimated P24 billion. The net profit should be higher," he said.

All Capital analyst Jose Vistan said the market had already priced in a P25 billion net profit for PLDT on expectations of a strong fourth quarter as people bought new mobile phones at most Christmas bonuses to upgrade their services.

First Pacific also owns 46 percent of PT Indofood Sukses Makmur Tbk, the world's largest maker of instant noodles.

Morgan Stanley analyst Rob Laqui said Pangilinan was thought to be interested in acquisitions in Thailand, but he added there were no clear targets for the firm.

"Obviously, this adds to some of the cash-on-hand risk," Barnard. "I'm glad the company's got the cash, but which assets are they going to buy?"

The sale was underwritten by UBS and was completed overnight. The sale was expected from an original $100 million size through the exercise of a greenshoe option.

Reuters

Taiwan firm putting up factory in RP

By Ramon M. Dungca

A TAIWANESE electronics manufacturing firm is planning to transfer its operations to the country from China mainly due to the huge pool of engineers in the Philippines, Trade Secretary Cesar E.A. Purisima recently said.

Purisima said the company, UNI Technology Co. LTD, wanted to put up in the country a factory for personal computers without "unreasonable" concession and stable assembly.

The official said UNI's decision stemmed from the lack of engineers in China who would undertake research and development projects for the company.

Purisima said the firm had already sent a team to check out the Philippines as a possible site for its new investments.

"UNI officials were pleased with the capability of the country's human resources," he said. "Their team has toured various universities in Metro Manila and noted that the country has an abundant pool of engineers to develop new products for their market."

UNI products and services range from motherboard connector, cable assemblies, plastic injection molding, silicon rubber, key pad products, tool making, mechanical and electrical design, and finished product assembly and testing.

Among the connectors that UNI make are the circular connector, field installation and panel, surface mount wire-to-wire, PC-wire, S-adv series, S1-45, USB mini dix, LAN cable series and plastic injection products.

PSBank

Philbank Center, 777 Paseo de Roxas cor. Sedeño St., Makati City

STATEMENT OF CONDITION
(Head Office and Branches)
As of December 29, 2004

ASSETS

Cash and Cash Items	P	803,329,045.87
Due from Bangko Sentral		1,317,736,167.98
Due from Other Banks		1,957,404,208.73
Interbank Loans Receivable		620,000,000.00
Trading Account Securities (Net)		1,369,062,784.67
Investments in Bonds and Other Debt Instruments (Net)		11,230,883,130.46
Loans, Discounts & Advances (Net)		23,550,994,274.59
Equity Investments (Net)		20,000,000.00
Bank Premises, Furniture, Fixtures and Equipment (Net)		1,046,939,611.82
Other Assets (Net)		
Property Owned/Acquired		2,079,404,255.75
Others		1,752,520,961.15
TOTAL ASSETS	P	46,010,093,441.21

LIABILITIES

Demand Deposits	P	1,887,574,543.66
Savings Deposits		13,572,072,027.98
Time Deposits		14,600,327,554.68
Due to Bangko Sentral		12,170,000.00
Outstanding Checks/Payment Orders		172,420,753.49
Bills Payable		
BSP Rediscount/Special Programs		-
Unearned Income & Other Deferred Credits		30,101,332.10
Other Liabilities		960,636,129.77
TOTAL LIABILITIES	P	41,367,132,440.23

CAPITAL ACCOUNTS

Capital Stock	P	1,700,010,000.00
Surplus		2,910,950,713.94
Surplus Reserves		339,000,071.21
TOTAL CAPITAL ACCOUNTS	P	4,639,960,985.15
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND CAPITAL ACCOUNTS	P	46,010,093,441.21

CONTINGENT ACCOUNTS

Rate for Collection	P	474,797.72
Assets Held Under Trust and Investment Management Agreements		981,144,651.66
Investors' Government Securities		222,886,373.68
Other Securities, Debt Instruments and Shares of Stock		37,774,733.66
Other Assets		980,614,158.59
Accounts Payable - Trust & Other Fiduciary		163,758,621.28
Common Trust Funds		
Investment Fund Management		607,300,000.27
Other Contingent Accounts		69,510,518.27
TOTAL CONTINGENT ACCOUNTS	P	766,187,837.82

Additional Information
1. Deposits of
a) Government P
b) Banks
c) Trust Department
2. a. Total Non-Performing Loans
b. Classified Loans & Other Real Assets
c. General Loan Loss Reserve
d. Specific Loan Loss Reserve
e. Total DOSRI Loans/Advances
f. Past Due DOSRI Loans Interested
g. Ratio of Non-Performing Loans to Total Loan Portfolio
h. Ratio of Total DOSRI Loans/Advances to Total Loan Portfolio
i. Ratio of Past Due DOSRI to Total Loan Portfolio
j. Return on Equity

Board of Directors
Jose T. Pardo, Chairman
Arthur C. Ty, Vice Chairman
Joselito P. Cinco, Vice Chairman
Margaret T. Gisbert
Sandy L. Ocier
Pascual M. Garcia, III
Jose Ricardo Laurel, IV
Alberto A. Pedroso
Peggy V. Pura
Angelito B. Villanueva

Principal Officers
Pascual M. Garcia, III, President
Rolando A. Rodriguez, Executive Vice President
Jaime A. De Leon, Senior Vice President
Jaime U. L. Ardales, Senior Vice President

REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES)
Makati City) S.S.

We, WILLIE C. GOMEZ and PASCUAL M. GARCIA, III of the above-mentioned bank do solemnly swear that all matters and facts in the above statement of condition are true and correct to the best of our knowledge and belief.

(Sgd.) WILLIE C. GOMEZ, Senior Vice President
(Sgd.) PASCUAL M. GARCIA, III, President

SUBSCRIBED AND SWORN to before me this January 5, 2005 at City of Makati, affiant exhibiting to me their Community Tax Certificates No. 24410000 issued at Manila on 13 April 2004 and No. 10764538 issued at Kawasaki City on 4 January 2004.

Doc. No. 404
Page No. 82
Book No. IV
Series of 2005

(Sgd.) ATTY. JOSE HERNANDEZ III
NOTARY PUBLIC
Until December 31, 2006
PTR No. 3696610 dtd. 1-06-05
IBP (Life No. 004682 dtd. 1-03-97)
City of Makati

Overhaul of tax structure planned

By Michelle V. Remo

THE DEPARTMENT of Finance is looking at overhauling the country's "complicated" tax structure, to make it taxpayer- and investor-friendly.

Such a move, it said, was necessary to improve the government's fiscal health.

Finance Secretary Juanita Amatong admitted that the present tax structure was not too business-friendly. Businesses cited the complex tax system as a case of factors that were hampering growth and discouraging investments.

The Finance chief said the BOF would start working on fixing the tax structure once the task of pushing for the legislation of the Arroyo administration's proposed revenue-raising measures was completed.

"It's a complicated tax structure that we have. There are too many taxes, and at the same time too many special laws that grant incentives," Amatong said.

But the time instead of applying different types of taxes and incentives to various sectors, the government would be better off imposing the lowest possible types rates but at the same time exploring the most number of taxpayers possible.

Another finance official explained that too many types of taxes made it complicated for taxpayers, especially corporate payers, to properly record their tax obligations, unlike when there are fewer tax taxes and collections.

He added that this also made it difficult for the government, the Bureau of Internal Revenue in particular, to administer taxes.

Where the tax structure is complicated, there is a tendency [for a tax examiner] to be subjective. That's where graft and corruption may come in," the finance official said. He explained that with simplified taxation, there would be no confusion as to what tax rates to impose on a certain taxpayer.

PLDT exceeds ₱24-B profit target for 2004

From page B1
crisis."

"These three are core, recurring gains, which we have already disclosed previously," he said.

But this year, Pangilinan would not commit a specific target, saying it was getting increasingly harder to make a forecast as PLDT's wireless units go deeper into the Filipino mainstream of the market. He said though that 2005 would be better than 2004.

PLDT registered a net income of P26 billion in the first nine months of 2004, prompting Pangilinan to raise the profit target for 2004 to P24 billion from P22 billion. Strong first half results in 2004 also led him to announce a higher number from the original profit target of P18 billion.

Smart Communications Inc. accounted for P16 billion of the profit during the first three quarters. By the end of the year, Smart's subscriber [illegible] would square more than 19 billion in net income following changes in PLDT's revenue sharing deal with Smart.

Of the P7 billion in profit that is earned in P4bn that year because of its changes, P3.7 billion was non-recurring. This year, Dibel is expected to register a net income of more than P3 billion.

Pangilinan said he was worried that wireless subscribers take up many slots down this year from around then 3 million in end-2004. But despite the setback in planned slowdown, he said profits of the company's wireless subsidiaries would remain robust in 2005.

MarkPlus Executive MasterClass

CHALLENGING
THE BIG BRANDS

Tuesday, January 25, 2005, 8AM-5PM
Makati Shangri-la (Rizal Ballrooms 1)

"Challenging The Big Brand" – a dazzling exploration to the arena beyond to assist to help your brands against their strongest rivals. The program will take you to develop creative ideas on how to get organizational alignment to take extraordinary marketing approaches.

Featuring
HERMAWAN KARTAJAYA
The Asian Marketing Guru
One of 10 Gurus in the world who have shaped the future of marketing, chosen by Chartered Institute of Marketing - United Kingdom

Guest Speaker
Mr. Manuel P. Quiogue
President & CEO, Citra 7 Marketing & Productions Inc.

Contact Persons
Gerardo de Guia / Aileen Ramos

MarkPlus&Co
www.markplusinc.com

Supported by: INQUIRER

New tax scheme drags vehicle sales down

By Russell N. Dantinga

VEHICLE sales slid 6.6 percent in 2004, mainly due to sluggish demand for commercial vehicles.

Record prices increases brought about by the imposition of a new excise tax scheme resulted in a substantial drop in the sales of commercial vehicles.

Industry sales for last year reached 181,003 units, down from 93,340 units sold in 2003.

The 2004 sales figure was about half percent higher than the forecast of 67,000 units. However, the assemblers of the locally-built to sell a total of 100,000 units for the entire year.

In a joint report, the Chamber of Automotive Manufacturers of the Philippines (Campi) and the Truck Manufacturers Associa-

tion (TMA) said that while the new tax scheme boosted turnover of passengers cars "significantly" this was not enough to register growth in overall sales.

An increase in the demand was seen in low-displacement passenger car models mainly due to increasing fuel prices, the groups claimed.

The introduction of new sedan models and the effect of the new excise tax resulted in a 10 percent growth in passenger car sales, they added.

A total of 93,182 passenger cars were sold in 2004 compared to 84,304 the previous year.

Commercial vehicle sales declined by 30.8 percent as a result of the new excise tax as well as the slow first half sales due to the wait-and-see attitude of the market during the election season, the groups said in a statement.

The continued influx of imported used vehicles also pushed down sales of new vehicles, they claimed.

Sales of commercial vehicles—Asian utility vehicles, light commercial vehicles, light trucks, and trucks and buses—reached 54,821 units last year from 63,614 units in 2003.

Sales of of light trucks were down by 43 percent, 18.5%, down by 46 percent, and trucks and buses, 2 percent. However, LCVs' sales grew by 1.8 percent.

In terms of total sales, Toyota Motor Philippines Corp. remained the market leader with a share of 33.2 percent,it sold 29,198 units in 2004, up by 1 per cent from last year.

Mitsubishi Motors Philippines Corp. placed second with 14.5 percent of the market, selling 12,717 units. But this represented a 17.5 percent decline in sales in 2003.

Honda Cars Philippines Inc. came in third with 12 percent of the market. It sold 10,566 units last year, a decline of 30.8 percent from the year ago clipate.

In the passenger car segment, Toyota grabbed 46.7 percent of the market. Honda held 22.1 percent and Nissan Motors Philippines Inc. had 9 percent.

In terms of commercial vehicles, grabbing 25.2 percent of the market segment. Mitsubishi garnered 19.5 percent and Isuzu Philippines Corp. held 18.9 percent.

Lawmakers seek Epira amendment

By Abigail L. Ho

MEMBERS of the House committee on energy are pushing for the amendment of Republic Act No. 9136, or the Electric Power Industry Reform Act of 2001 (Epira).

The lawmakers are particularly interested in changing the provision giving the Department of Energy the authority to manage funds derived from power generators' financial assistance to their host communities.

House committee on energy chair and Lanao del Norte Rep. Abpen Cedo Jaafellen said these financial benefits, mandated by Energy Regulation 1-94 (ER 1-94), should be managed by the local government units where the power generation facilities were located.

As mandated by ER 1-94, power plant operators should give 1 centavo for every kilowatt of electricity that they produce to the communities where their plants are situated.

Host communities of geothermal, hydroelectric and other types of power plants are entitled to that monetary benefit.

Under the current set-up, the DOE manages the funds derived from this mandate.

During a recent House committee on energy hearing, Baddiles said members of the committee agreed that the local government units should be the ones handling the funds instead of the DOE.

Bo said Batangas Rep. Fernando Mandanas proposed that power producers like the National Power Corp. and independent power producers directly remit their ER 1-94 requirements to the governments of their host communities.

The issue of whether or not the DOE should continue to be the custodian of the ER 1-94 funds was discussed because of some complaints that local government units raised against the DOE with regard to the funds.

These complaints include delays in the disbursement of project subsidies as well as the stringent requirements for the acquisition and utilization of funds from the ER 1-94 proceeds.

As a result, Baddiles said the DOE had been ordered, as resolved during the same hearing, to prepare a thorough and detail report of how much of the ER 1-94 funds it had in its custody, including the interest the money had earned over the years.

The DOE/ER 1-94 fund been estimated to run up to the hundreds of millions of pesos, he said.

Agri entrepreneurs make up 42% of EOY nominees

NOMINATIONS for the Entrepreneur of the Year (EOY) Philippines 2004, which came from all over the country, represented a wide range of industries particularly agribusiness, according to the SGV Foundation Inc., which spearheads the annual awards.

SGV Foundation chair David L. Balangue said nominees from the agribusiness and food sectors made up 42 percent of this year's entry, from which will be drawn the category winners and the Entrepreneur Of The Year Philippines 2004.

Balangue pointed out that the predominance of agribusiness entrepreneurs proved that the Entrepreneur Of The Year Philippines awards were timely.

Close to 50 nominations were submitted. The nominees were then ranked financially using a system used by all Entrepreneur Of The Year participating countries. Nominees who made the short list will be interviewed by the committee. Based on the interviews, the committee will further trim the list and select the finalists. A distinguished panel of judges will then select the winners from among the finalists. The finalists and winners will be recognized in a grand awards banquet on Feb. 26, 2005 at the Grand Ballroom of Makati Shangri-La.

"Connections of entrepreneurs have made an enormous wide contribution to the prosperity of nations, and to the quality of lives of people. We are delighted to play a role in the promotion and celebration of the spirit of entrepreneurship in Philippines, and the economic and social benefits it brings to the community," said Alice Ilado, managing director of The Citigroup Private Bank. The bank is a major sponsor of the SGV1 Philippines award.

REGGIE Aspiras on her mom and food /C3

LIFESTYLE

Editor Chris Bunuel-Formoso

Feast of clay

Text by Vangie Baga-Reyes
Photos by Jiri Gatan Poncian

COOKING in a clay pot is one of the oldest cooking techniques in the world. It has been around at least since the Roman times of western civilization.

In Asia, many of China's wonderful dishes have always been traditionally prepared in clay pots.

Clay-pot dishes are the Chinese version of the American casserole. The main difference, however, is that they are cooked on top of the stove rather than in the oven.

The design of the clay pot assures good conservation of heat, so that even if dinner is delayed, the food stays piping hot.

The Mandarin Oriental, Manila (tel. 8160888) is holding a gastronomic clay pot food festival until Jan. 23 to offer locals the best of Chinese cuisine traditionally prepared and served in clay pots. The festival is being held at the hotel's Tin Hau restaurant on the second floor.

Executive Chinese chef Tin Ming Hai (a.k.a. Sam) has whipped up an array of his specialty clay-pot dishes, from beef to chicken, fish, pork, duck, eel and frog legs, cooked Cantonese style. Cantonese cuisine uses a great many flavors, all of which are enhanced by the clay pot cooking method.

"Clay pots are used largely in China because it's a piece of cookware that distributes heat evenly in its interior," says Sam. "It produces delicious, moist foods in which the flavors mingle, with little fat."

Exceptional clay pot

For his clay-pot dishes, Tin Hau uses imported cookware made from unglazed clay that withstands direct flame or direct contact with an electric burner. The clay pots produce rich, concentrated, slow-cooked, braised or stewed dishes.

"Clay-pot cooking also produces good roasted meats due to the additional moisture from soaking, and gives dishes additional crispiness and deeper browning," Sam says.

Among the rich selection of clay-pot dishes is the Pen-Nied Eel and Pork Lechon with Brown Sauce in Clay Pot (P560). The eel has a nice flaky texture. It has its own gamy flavor that separates it from other seafood. The dish comes with a rich, thick brown sauce.

The Essential Braised Mix 26 Spareribs in Clay Pot (P480) has a cherry-colored sauce flavored with fish sauce and a "secret" Chinese ingredient. The sauce is carefully arranged in a clay pot and gently braised.

The fish dishes are similarly flavorful. The Pan-Fried Salmon Fish Head (P500) is cooked with leeks and ginger in clay pot.

But the perennial biggest-crowd pleaser is the Salted Duck, Pork Sausage with Yam in Clay Pot (P820). It consists of slices of duck meat and sausage and taro cooked to common mills.

Soft but rice prepared hot pot dishes with rice, including Dried Chinese Duck in Rice (P600) and Chinese Sausage with Chicken in Rice (P400).

The preparation of food in a time-honored manner is something that should interest every food lover. The Mandarin Oriental beckons.

E-mail the author at vbaga@inquirer.com.ph

SALTED Duck, Pork Sausage with Yam in Clay Pot

CHINESE Sausage with Chicken in Rice

BRAISED Wu Ki Spareribs in Clay Pot

The Mandarin Oriental celebrates flavorful clay-pot cooking

DRIED Chinese Duck in Rice

PAN-FRIED Salmon Fish Head with Leeks and Ginger in Clay Pot

PEN-FRIED Eel and Pork Lechon with Brown Sauce in Clay Pot

MANDARIN Oriental Manila executive Chinese chef Tin Ming Hai

Nightmare on Morato Street

We commiserate with residents of Timog Avenue Street who have to live with the noise of bars and discos, not to mention chaotic traffic and the coming and going of vehicles belonging to customers of the various establishments.

Not too long ago, this street was a homeowner's paradise.

Well, it's no longer that, according to resident Julian Rodriguez (julro@yahoo.com), whose letter gives an idea of how it is now to live on this highly commercialized avenue. A Quezon City ordinance is a leaky area around the now Pearl Bank Building.

"Noise pollution in my place is horrible particularly at around 10 p.m. when we start hearing the (magnified) boombooom sound from one of the condominiums in the building. The loud music, particularly on weekends, can last up to 3:30 a.m. Needless to say, sleeping is impossible.

"In addition to that, internal noises coming from the booming stereo systems at the workers' sleeping quarters of Pan Chai restaurant make life miserable for us."

Rodriguez added that another cause of aggravation is residents near the roaring-and-going of customers' vehicles that never parked at their properties. "They encroach on our parking space. Moreover, they pollute the air we breathe. It's also a problem getting in and out of our gate, especially when the customers don't park their vehicles properly" he wrote.

"We have repeatedly called the attention of our barangay officers since March when the establishments in our area started operating. Why little... has changed."

Calling on Mayor Sonny Belmonte to implement the law on public nuisance.

Shortchanging consumers

Last weekend, an irate consumer went to a complaint against business establishments that don't give customers their exact change. It's a timely concern as former Manny Villar is filing Senate Bill 649, also known as "Exact Change Act" that will require business establishments to give customers their exact change in the form of money or less. When passed, violation of the act will be considered a trade malpractice and punishable.

Here's the complaint from the concerned consumer: "I just fed up with business establishments that do not give you your exact change. And worse, some cashiers do not even bother to tell you that your change is (short of a few cents). Why is it that cashiers seem to run out of 10 and five centavos coins all the time?

"Last week, for example, a cashier of Hi-Top supermarket was supposed to give me P5.05 in change, but she only handed me P5.00. If these cashiers cannot give their customers the exact change, then I suggest that store owners (instead of) their prizes... (to) cashiers (will not have a) problem with loose change."

Traffic obstruction

From our friend Atanch Ng Lim of Citibank: "I am another one of those slow-moving trucks carrying a billboard of ABC-Bdoo who said along Ilaya during the rush hour. Don't they realize traffic rules?"

We are sure these slow-moving mobile billboards realize certain traffic rules considering there are specified speed limits for thoroughfares. They are certainly traffic observations, and they distract the attention of other drivers, as well.

Speaking of billboards, our legislators should file a bill that will restrict the structural safety of imposing structures. Consider our suggestions: electrical wiring should be insulated to prevent electrocution, barriers should be in place to prevent unauthorized individuals from reading the situation, materials should be fireproof, structures should be sound and reinforced to withstand the forces of nature, etc.

We end this installment with a note of praise and appreciation for all the help we received when we couldn't write our article because our computer was hacked with a virus.

Our thanks to Ali Hinoto, IT specialist of a computer product company, publicist Bob Manzano, and Julie Ann Sanchez, technical support of Bytel Technologies.

E-mail the author at morato@hotmail.com.

Showcase of Sweden's classic country cooking

IKEA Kitchen Media presents "Distinctly Swedish" until Jan. 15 at Lagman's Bar. Some star dishes in the program: Gravad Lax with Dill-Mustard Sauce, Swedish Meatballs with Cranberry Sauce, Veal Stew with Dill, Gotlandspannkaka (Veal Pancakes with Cranberries and Whipped Cream, and Swedish Apple Pie with Vanilla Sauce. Call 1508888.

DINING OUT

CIRCLES Event Cafe features mini cafe and salads, Asian cuisine, steaks, pasta concoctions, sushi and sashimi, meriendas, chocolate pralines, freshly baked breads, cakes and a chocolate fountain. Circles Event Cafe is located at the lobby of Makati Shangri-La. Call 8138888.

PASEA HOT Bistro offers a wide array of appetizers, pasta choices, signature dishes, dessert and coffee concoctions. The bistro is located at the upper G/F Gateway Mall, Araneta Center, Quezon City.

UCC's Sausage and Bacon Pizza Toast pairs together chicken cubes of savory delights mixed with slices of green bell pepper and onions. Portions of sausage and bacon are placed on top of Japanese bread spread with thick tomato pizza sauce. It has a generous serving of mozzarella cheese and sprinkling of aromatic herbs. Also take pleasure in Garlicious Pizza Toast or Vegetable Pizza Toast. UCC coffee shops are located at Tomas Morato, Quezon City Commercial Bldg., Greenhills, Tiendesitas, Ortigas Center, Forbes Town Center, The Fort, and Paseo Center, Makati.

BUILD Hotel presents its Cake of the Month, Praline Cake. Made of soft walnut sponge and praline butter cream, this cake is offered at ₱8 per serving, ₱1 until Jan. 31. In Deli of the Month, Cote Rotie Terrine, is available until Jan. 31 at Sea Bar and Teppanyaki Restaurant. Call 9248811.

Nutritious 'survival' recipes

MAYA Kitchen's "Survival Cooking Recipes" on Jan. 15, 9 a.m.-1 p.m., offers ideas on how to prepare nutritious filling dishes in 60 minutes or less.

Learn how to make Hot and Sour Chicken Soup, Vegetable Tofu Satay, Shredded Chicken Salad, Baked Eggplant with Yogurt, Chicken Feta and Pasta Salad, Carbonara, Ingredient and Shrimp Salad, Fishballs in Pesto Sauce, Beef Quesadillas, Fish Cucumber Rasadon Style and Ginger Plan. Participants will get a free Survival Cooking book.

Also on Jan. 15, 1:30-5 p.m., is a session on "Bestseller Food Writers." Learn Recipe Formulation, Planning and Plating with lecture on Proper Storing of Ingredients to increase shelf life and handling. Create your sandwich in like Pastrami, Roast Beef a la Dijonnaise, Herbed Chicken, Chilliroast and Vegetarian.

Learn baking basics in "Cake Decorating Class 2," on Jan. 15-22, 9 a.m.-4 p.m. The hands-on workshop will cover the fundamentals of cake decorating, coloring, designing, templates, icing (boiled, butter, caramel, chocolate, sugar icing), basic borders, jelly lettering, basic flower making and frosting.

Visit the Maya Kitchen (Thursday-Saturday), 8/F Liberty Building, A. Arnaiz Avenue (formerly Reay Road), Makati City, or call 8925 385 or 8926581. Email 100.or-e-mail mayakitchen@hotmail.com.ph.com.ph.

Stew, roll and roast

THE REGGIE Angeles School of Culinary Arts will conduct the following classes:

Jan. 14: Oriental Stews (all serve)—Indonesian Curry Cola Stew with Leeks, Thai Beef Stew with Chili Sauce, Oxtail and Tamarind Stew, Kenya Style Duck Stew, Oriental Chicken with Mushrooms.

Jan. 15: The Best Cinnamon Rolls Ever—Two versions of melt-in-your-mouth cinnamon roll dough—classic and variations with cream cheese topping, chocolate sauce, citrus peanut swirl, sticky buns.

Jan. 17: Everyday Chicken (all serve)—Lemon Chicken, Chicken with Basil, Xiang Pan Chicken, Lemon Grass Chicken, Chicken with Pan Gravy and Mushrooms, Butter Rice, Deviled Chicken with Homemade Sweet Chili Sauce, Indo-Adobo.

Jan. 19: United States Department of Agriculture Beef and California Wine Promotion. Learn how to roast the most tenanted beef into delicious and for cheaper than your regular roast cuts; steps with Angus beef belly, top blade and hanger steaks; roasting, grilling, serving; right delicious beef recipes; soup, salad and side dishes; wine appreciation.

Call 9289006, 9279008, 9295502 or 0917-8299888.

Mom's birthday leads to discovery ...

ARMARO Rustic

cloth, charcoal grilled, dining dishes, gravy on heated boats, even fondlights if you're having the event in your garden, as we did. A properly geared grill master by the name of Stanley cooked our beef according to the way each one of us wanted it.

The part I loved best was that it was extremely reasonable at P450 a kilo! If you ask me, this will remain a party staple for many years to come! Call 9269687 or 9265844 to order. Minimum order is five kilos.

And since this is all about my mom, I asked her to answer your recipe requests for dining/entertaining and the perfect grandma gift. Those recipes bring back memories of my childhood... great tasting comfort foods. Her secret: her she could prepare!

Soggy veggie

I would like to know how to cook vegetables properly. My cook and I don't seem to know how to do it. (The vegetables are) always rainbow and soggy. Any tips for everyday cooks and moms like me?

JENNY

Mom: Just the same problem with her cooks. Steam-cook just a bit of people can do delicious boiling/baking veggies. And if you have a mom like mine who requires each major food group to be represented at every meal—with each "representative" well-cooked (so vegetables rarely cook at the same time (carrots, broccoli, cabbage, winged beans, Baguio beans, chicharo, tapa, cauliflower, perhaps ups, potato...)

Stir-fry shrimps, peeled, reserve shrimp heads (Mom uses small shrimps for this)

shrimp heads (~ 1/3-1/2 c) water
30 g pork lempo, finely sliced, optional (Mom hardly uses it)
2 tbsp oil
1 tbsp garlic, chopped
½ c onions, chopped
2 tsp bagong balgat (optional)
salt and pepper to taste
patis to taste
Peanut shrimp heads in a stock pot, add 1/2 c water, mix with a spoon or paste, gently pressing on the shrimp heads to extract juice. Drain. Set aside.

Heat up oil. Sauté garlic and onion. Add pork, brown slightly. Add shrimps. When shrimp changes color add vegetables and shrimp stock. Season to taste with bagong salt, pepper and patis.

Remember to keep an eye on the veggies, you want them half cooked, still retaining their natural color.

'Mellow bruggenger'

Can I request for a simple yet delicious bruggenging turkey recipe? I don't like it too overpowering. I live in California and only have the weekends to cook. I want that it freezes well. All the best to you!

JENNIQUEZ
SF, CA

Mom's bruggenger sauce off like her cooks. She adds the bagong toward the end. Simple and delicious! Just the way you like it! And that OKra, sorry, sorry... Double's help!!

1 (pork lempo, cubed 1" x 1"
1 head (bike garlic, peeled and slightly pounded
3/4 tbsp vinegar (Datong Pet is okay)
1 tsp whole peppercorns
water
1-2 tbsp bagong alamang, not sweet
1-2 pcs green chili, pang-sigang, sliced
Heat up a heavy saucepan. When pan is hot, drop pork pieces into the pan. Cook until most have light golden brown.

Add garlic, peppercorns. Saute for a few minutes. Add vinegar and scrape the tiny stuck to the bottom of the pan.

Add water just enough to cover submerge the meat. Bring mixture to a boil and simmer over lowest possible heat until pork is soft. Add bagong and chilies and let simmer for 10 minutes.

Let out stock's fill adds recipe for a more thorough procedure.

Pls love you Mom...happy birthday! Thank you for loving us, your imperfect children, so perfectly!

For comments or suggestions, use (917) 8299888.

POTATO Cakes with Luncheon Meat and Citrus

Herbs for a healthy new year

EXPLORE the many varieties of herbs and enjoy its wonderful, exotic flavors while getting some health benefits as well.

The Inn Miguel Pensbouds Culinary Center offers easy delicious recipes using herbs. Try the Potato Cakes with Pan-fried Luncheon Meat and Chives Tee a light lunch, have

lecture on Proper Storing of Ingredients to increase shelf life and handling. Create your sandwich in like Pastrami, Roast Beef a la Dijonnaise, Herbed Chicken, Chilliroast and Vegetarian.

Learn baking basics in "Cake Decorating Class 2," on Jan. 15-22, 9 a.m.-4 p.m. The hands-on workshop will cover the fundamentals of cake decorating, coloring, designing, templates, icing (boiled, butter, caramel, chocolate, sugar icing), basic borders, jelly lettering, basic flower making and frosting.

Visit the Maya Kitchen (Thursday-Saturday), 8/F Liberty Building, A. Arnaiz Avenue (formerly Reay Road), Makati City, or call 8925 385 or 8926581. Email 100.or-e-mail mayakitchen@hotmail.com.ph.com.ph.

Stew, roll and roast

THE REGGIE Angeles School of Culinary Arts will conduct the following classes:

Jan. 14: Oriental Stews (all serve)—Indonesian Curry Cola Stew with Leeks, Thai Beef Stew with Chili Sauce, Oxtail and Tamarind Stew, Kenya Style Duck Stew, Oriental Chicken with Mushrooms.

Jan. 15: The Best Cinnamon Rolls Ever—Two versions of melt-in-your-mouth cinnamon roll dough—classic and variations with cream cheese topping, chocolate sauce, citrus peanut swirl, sticky buns.

Jan. 17: Everyday Chicken (all serve)—Lemon Chicken, Chicken with Basil, Xiang Pan Chicken, Lemon Grass Chicken, Chicken with Pan Gravy and Mushrooms, Butter Rice, Deviled Chicken with Homemade Sweet Chili Sauce, Indo-Adobo.

Jan. 19: United States Department of Agriculture Beef and California Wine Promotion. Learn how to roast the most tenanted beef into delicious and for cheaper than your regular roast cuts; steps with Angus beef belly, top blade and hanger steaks; roasting, grilling, serving; right delicious beef recipes; soup, salad and side dishes; wine appreciation.

Call 9289006, 9279008, 9295502 or 0917-8299888.

DELICIOUS Lechon Baka for the Diab

Mom's birthday leads to discovery of a lifetime

THIS IS all about my mom, who turned 77 last Jan. 8.

In fact, we owe much of what is "good" in us and what we've become, like a zesty things to many people...human rice governor of La Union, socio-civic workers. On her gone on... But so as, she's the most endearing "Amparing," wife to the late Joe Aquino; "Mom" to her grandchildren and great grandchildren, and "Mom."

Each year, we try to make her birthday as special as it could be. My part in the project is consommate chef and "food avant." Topping the previous year a always difficult but my 2000 feat is a discovery of a lifetime.

Vera and Al Camacho came up with Lechon Baka by the Diab, roasted and served before your very eyes. The beef is from Australian cattle that the Camachos fatten and age in the Philippines. The gory days of a cow with a bamboo pole sticking from its mouth with eyes half open, pleading for help and asking "why, why is this being done to me?" are over!

KITCHEN RESCUE

Maggie Aquino

But kidding aside, this is the best lechon ba- ka I've ever tasted. Imagine juicy slices of prime rib chuck of beef, marinated overnight in herbs and spices and served straight off a hot charcoal grill with gravy! Ecstasy in every bite!

The beef takes only an hour to cook and everything else is taken care of. From table to